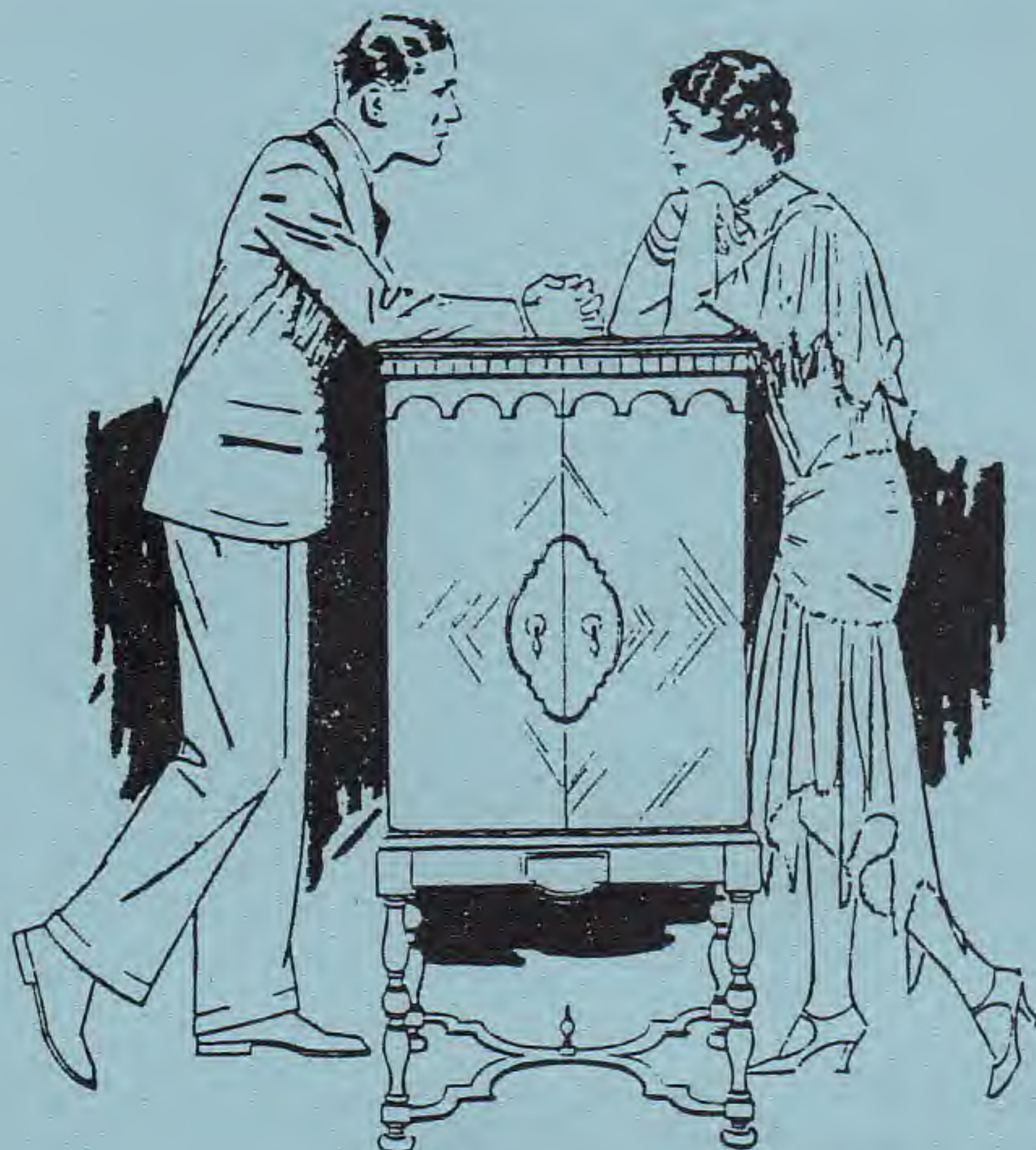


Victrola and 78 Journal

ISSUE 4

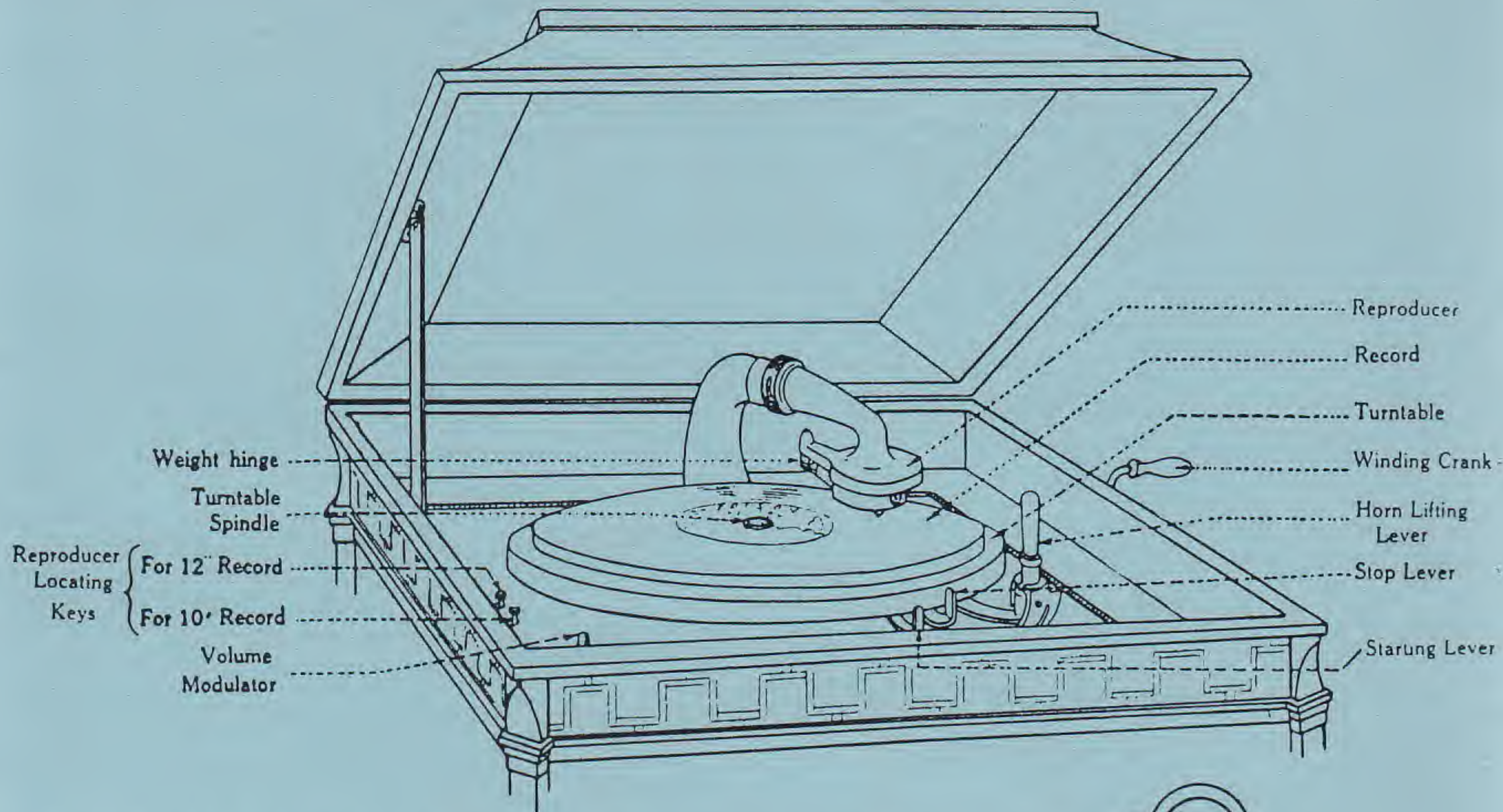
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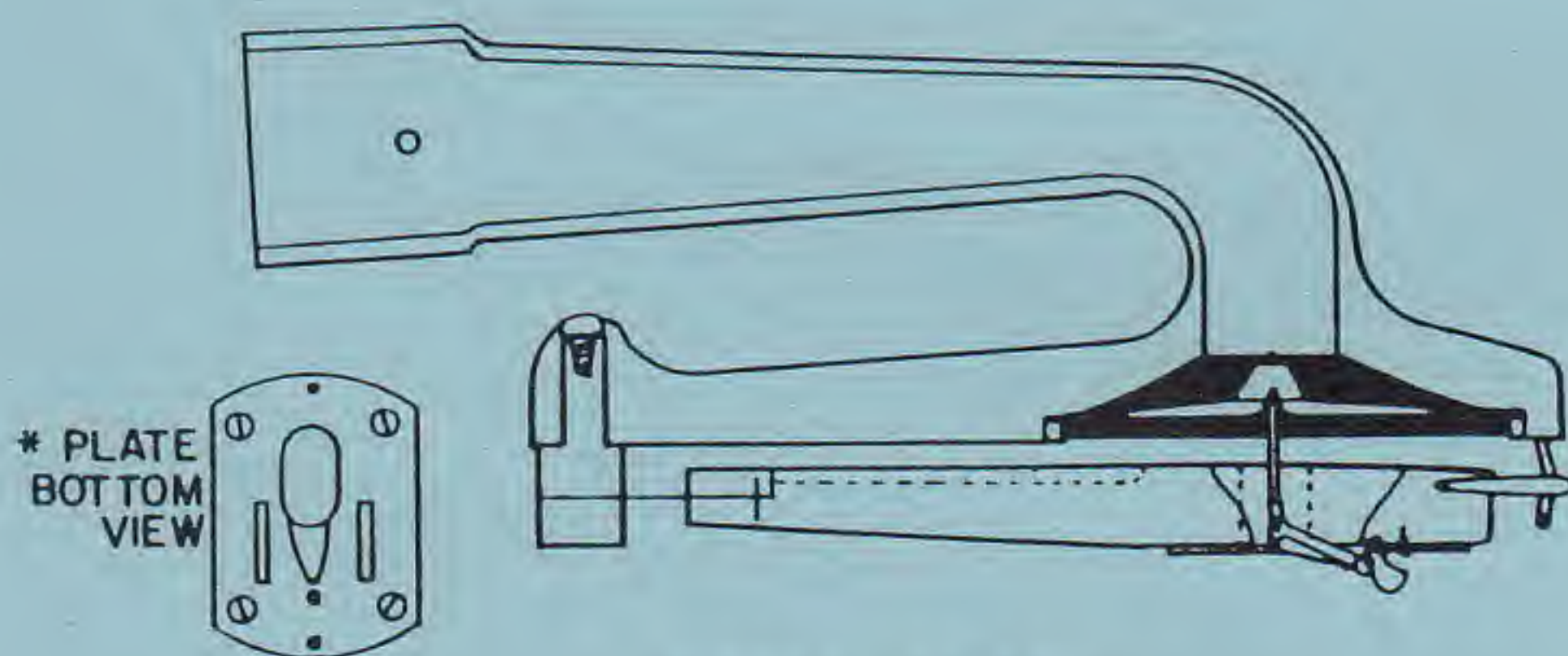
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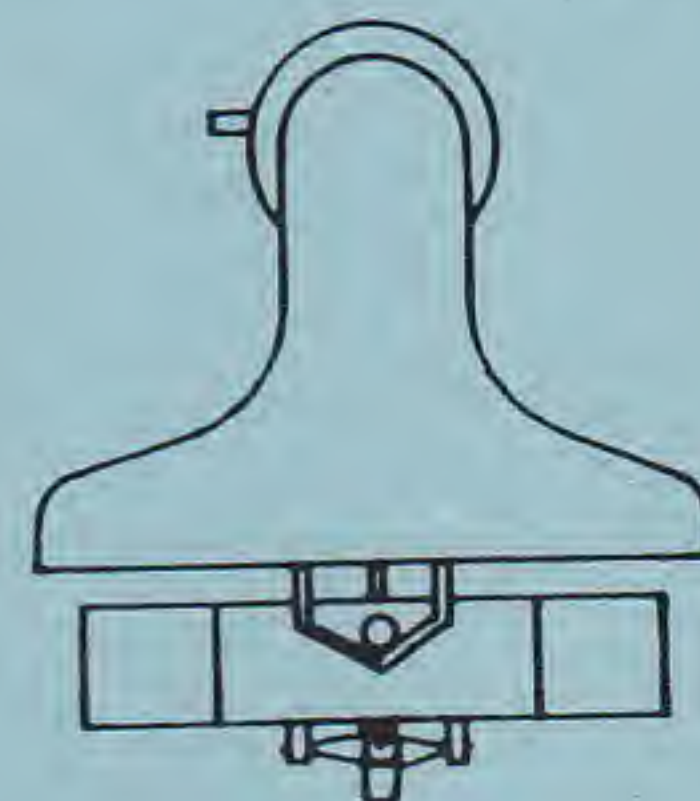
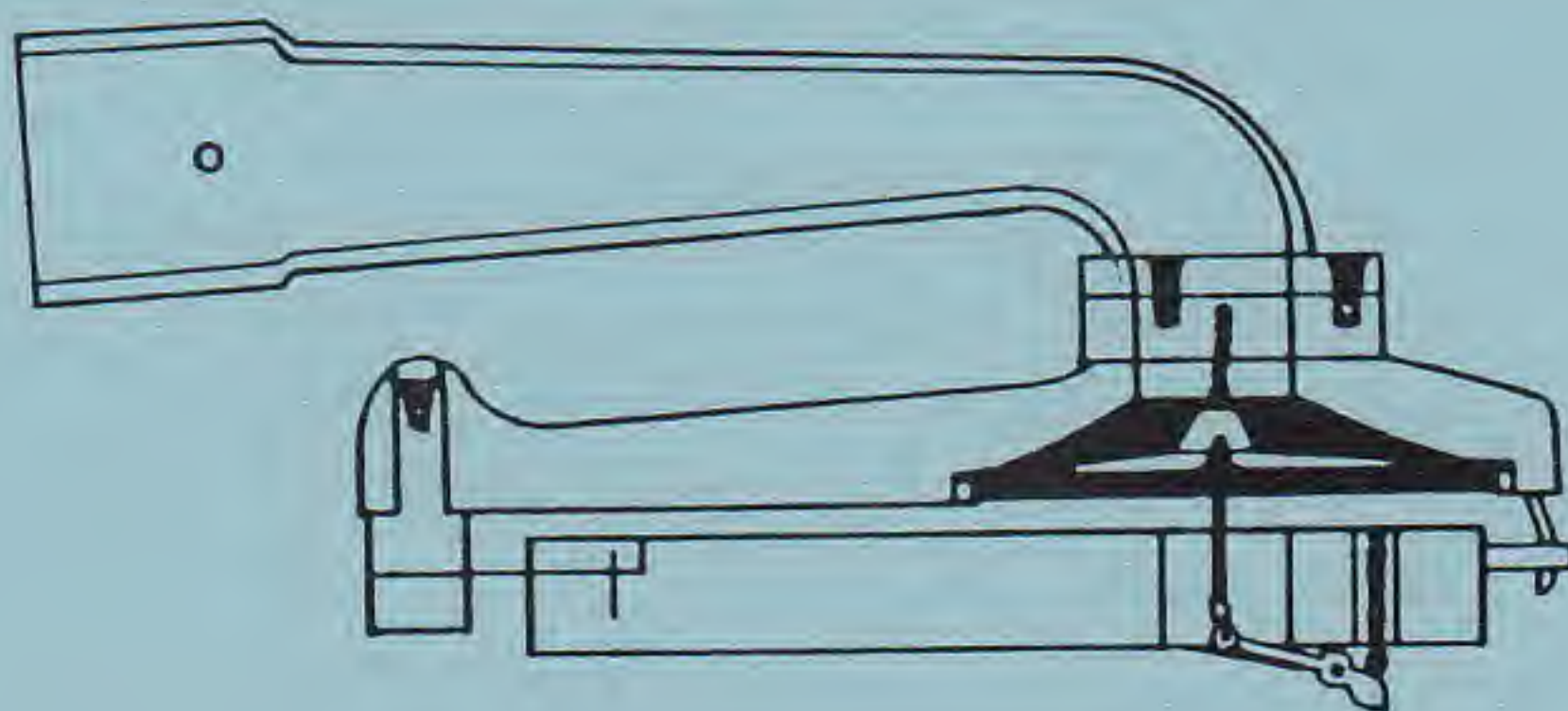


EDISON DIAMOND DISC REPRODUCERS

EARLY MODELS 1912-1927



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CARUSO'S WEAKEST RECORDINGS

By Charles Arnhold

Before I moved recently, collectors often gathered at my San Jose home to listen to our newly-acquired 78s or old favorites. Sometimes, as in the case of Emilio de Gogorza, someone would exclaim, "That's a singer who never made a bad record!" A few collectors I know say this is true of Enrico Caruso.

Caruso made so many exceptional records--"Questa o quella" from Rigoletto, "Una furtiva lagrima" (1904 version) from L'Elisir D'Amore, "Si, pel ciel" with Titta Ruffo from Otello, and many more--that it is a bit mean to pick nits among the 240 or so published records. Hardly anyone would doubt that Caruso is one of the two or three greatest singers to have ever recorded. It is no accident that Caruso appears more than any other singer in the "Ten Most Played 78s" lists in Victrola and 78 Journal.

I have been asked if I could identify Caruso's dozen worst recordings. At first, that sounded fun, but the more I thought about it, the more perilous it became. In the first place, I love Caruso's recordings. I have collected them since I was 14, and for decades they have brought such joy that to trash any seems at best mere ingratitude, at worst unspeakable heresy.

Secondly, such ratings can only be opinion, and several recordings I don't like may, for some obscure reason, be another collector's favorites. Take, for example, the Neapolitan song "Tu, ca nun chiagne," which has never appealed to me. An Italian-American friend, who is a very advanced collector, insists it is a wonderful recording and the fault is with me because I'm not fluent in Italian. He says that if I were fluent, I would appreciate how great the recording is.

Evidence that my friend is right about "Tu, ca nun chiagne" comes from no less an authority than

Giovanni Martinelli. When I was in high school in England, I used to listen to a radio program called "Desert Island Discs." A celebrity selected the eight records he would like were he stranded on a desert island, presumably with a wind-up Victrola and a gazillion needles. When Martinelli was the guest, he chose Caruso's "Tu, ca nun chiagne." I still have a tape of this program. So much for my opinion.

That the bulk of Caruso's recorded legacy has remained hors concours for three quarters of a century is by now indisputable, so please don't stick pins in little wax dummies of me!

It is impossible to attack Caruso's singing as such, but one may disparage the following: 1) records in which Caruso's approach is stylistically wrong; 2) records with technical shortcomings which no one thought worth curing; 3) records of dull music which disappoints in the light of other music he might have recorded instead.

A few of the earliest non-Victor recordings have notable technical flaws and false starts, yet they were issued. That never happened once Caruso started recording exclusively for Victor in February 1904. Caruso had high standards and worked closely with Victor executive Calvin Child to ensure a quality product. When takes of various songs and arias did not meet the tenor's or Child's approval, the masters were destroyed.

Examples of songs recorded but not approved for issue include "The Rosary" and "Dopo." A number of operatic excerpts were never issued: "Quando le sere al placido" from Luisa Miller, "Enzo Grimaldo" from La Gioconda with Ruffo (evidence suggests two copies of this exist; why no dubs?), the Tosca duets with Farrar, and so on. Presumably Caruso or Child had good reasons for not

approving them, but what a loss, as they were not re-recorded for issue!

Among these non-issues were three records which somehow have had limited circulation: the Carmen duet with Francis Alda, the Trovatore Miserere without chorus (also with Alda), and "O soave fanciulla" from La Boheme with Farrar. The latter was issued by IRCC backed by the 1904 "Mi par d'udir ancora" from The Pearl Fishers. To today's ears, none of these seems so bad as to prevent its being issued. Most collectors who have heard the Trovatore item prefer it to the published version with chorus, and I prefer the Boheme duet to the famous version with Melba. Farrar and Caruso sound like they are singing to each other whereas Melba and Caruso sound like they are singing at the horn.

Again, personal preferences and musical background can sway one's judgement. John Freestone and H.J. Drummond express a typically English outlook when they assess the tenor's recordings in their book Enrico Caruso: His Recorded Legacy (T.S. Denison & Co, 1961). They are generous towards the operatic items and some art songs, but they disparage many of the Neapolitan songs and some titles Caruso recorded obviously for the Latin market. At times the authors' tone is condescending. For example, in their review of "Lolita" (Cat. No. 88120, from 1908), they write on page 45, "I can find little to admire in this very ordinary song. Why Caruso chose to grace it with his voice is difficult to understand. It is like so many more pseudo Spanish songs of the period, complete with castanets, and yet so little like true Spanish music! Caruso sings it with great beauty, fluency and élan, but why?"

Harsh words indeed! That he sings it with "great beauty, fluency and élan" says it all. As it happens, I like the recording as much for its slightly kitsch pseudo-Spanishness, completely in context with its period, as for the beauty of the singing. This record was made at

the same March 1908 session as the two great solos from Rigoletto, and Caruso was never in better voice.

As a general rule of thumb, I have asked myself the following question while making these selections: "If someone with a bit of knowledge of singing and repertoire were to hear this recording as his first taste of Caruso, would the likely reaction be 'Humph! I don't hear anything in that to justify his reputation!'"

As I made this list, I revisited each recording to consider if judgements I had formed long ago of certain selections were valid today. My tastes must have changed over the years since there were a couple of surprises. In the past I had never much liked Caruso's record of "Nina,"



CHARLES ARNHOLD NEARLY INCLUDED "TU, CA NUN CHIAGNE" IN HIS LIST OF WEAK CARUSO RECORDINGS, YET GIOVANNI MARTINELLI PRIZED IT ABOVE OTHERS. IF YOU FIND A FAVORITE MENTIONED AS A "WEAK" RECORDING, CONSIDER CHARLIE'S REASONS--IF YOU DISAGREE, SEND IN COMMENTS. NOTICE THIS HMV PRESSING MISSPELLS "CHIAGNE." ALSO, THE DISC SHOULD REALLY BE PLAYED AT 75.00 RPM.

a song long attributed to Pergolesi. The tenor's approach to the song had seemed too heavy and stentorian, especially when compared to Bonci's recording of it. I listened recently and found Caruso takes more care than I had remembered and produces considerable delicacy here and there. But the overall effect is still the same: too much voice, too much portamento. Anyway, after reconsideration, "Nina" didn't make the list.

My selections of Caruso's least impressive recordings are:

- 1) "Luna fedel" (G & T 52442, matr. 2882). It's not that Caruso makes a false entry early on, but rather that he doesn't seem to give a hoot. I hear signs of boredom all through this performance. His Zonophone recording of the same song is far more expansive and carefully sung. The only redeeming feature of the G & T is a lovely high note at the end.
- 2) "Una furtiva lagrima" from L'Elisir D'Amore (G & T 52346, matr. 1786). This should never have been made in the first place, for there is no way to fit the aria on one 10 inch disc. It's rush, rush, rush all the way, and although Caruso sings well, I can find no pleasure in listening to it, especially when compared to the legendary 1904 Victors. Why this recording, of all those possible, was chosen as the sole example of Caruso in EMI's The Record Of Singing: Volume 1 baffles me utterly.
- 3) "Parmi veder le lagrime" from Rigoletto (Victor 88429, matr. C-11421-2). This recording, and the one following, were made at the same February 1913 session. Either the tenor was having a bad day or the recording machine was not well set up. Caruso sounds constricted and ill at ease. This is far too dramatic for the Duke. What a pity he didn't record it a decade earlier! We might have had a recording to rival Giuseppe Anselmi's reading.
- 4) "Agnus dei" by Bizet (Victor 88425, matr. C-12942-1). If you like your religion emotional and dramatic, you may like this. As with the Rigoletto aria cited above, Caruso sounds uncomfortable and restricted.
- 5) "Parted" (Victor 87186, matr. B-14550-1). Why, oh why did he record it? Tosti's song was popular in its day, of course, but Caruso's singing (for him) is expressionless. It's probably the last record I would play to introduce Caruso to beginners.
- 6) "Celeste Aida" from Aida (G & T 52369; matr. 2873). As hardcore collectors know, this recording was made to replace the incredibly rare matrix 1784 version, and is in every way inferior to it. It is indifferently sung, and the entire final phrase is omitted. It is possibly the easiest of Caruso's G & T's to obtain, as it lasted for years in various reissues, but his other versions of the aria are better.
- 7) "Che gelida manina" from La Boheme (Victor 88002, matr. C-3101-1). Here come the brickbats! I find this record my biggest disappointment in the tenor's discography. Freestone and Drummond like it a lot, and while some of their points are well-considered, my hunch is that here again the recording time was too short to allow Caruso to sing it as he would in the theater. The performance is not rushed, but neither are the phrases expansive and graceful as one would like. By comparison, Martinelli and Bonci soar; Caruso seems oddly earthbound.
- 8) "The Lost Chord" (Victor 88378, matr. C-11942-1). "... my fingers wandered idly, over the noisy keys . . ." Exactly.
- 9) "Dio, che nell'alma infondere" from Don Carlo, with Scotti (Victor 89064, matr. C-12752-1). Their last recording together, and, I believe, Scotti's last record to be published. This cut version of the great duet

leaves neither singer enough space to open up. There's nothing especially wrong with Caruso's performance, although the voice sounds a little hard at times, but finer versions of the duet exist.

10) "Serenade de Don Juan" (Victor 87175, matr. B-14355-1). Caruso sings this song by Ronald with, for him, an exceptional lack of grace. This is Don Juan as a serial rapist, not the subtle aristocrat.

11) "Di' tu se fedele" from Un Ballo in Maschera (Victor 87091, matr. B-11270-2). Caruso's voice sounds harsh and tight--he almost barks the music out at times. The fault may lie partly in the recording setup, but several of the other recordings made at this session (19 Nov. 1911) sound just fine.

12) "Je crois entendre encore" from Les Pêcheurs de Perles (Victor 88580, matr. C-18822-3). This is sung far too heavily and with too much effort. Although Caruso transposes the aria, he may have been uncomfortable with the tessitura at this stage of his career. An unidiomatic performance, not in the same league with the 1904 recording (G & T 052066).

If granted a baker's dozen, I would probably add the ludicrous "E lucevan le stelle" (G & T 52349, matr. 1790), which contains the worst mistake Caruso ever made on an issued recording. This disc would put off a newcomer, but the recording is somewhat of a curate's egg; once Caruso and the accompanist get together, the remainder of the performance is good.

Given Caruso's recorded output, should we be surprised that there are a few lemons? Of course not. I doubt if any other early artists with as substantial a number of released recordings issued fewer weak performances, and I am certainly not aware of anyone whose discography contains as high a percentage of really distinguished ones.

The sad thing is that some material which could have been recorded never was. I can think of items he could have recorded as substitutes for the titles listed above. In making these twelve selections, I kept two criteria in mind. I have purposely excluded pieces he did record but which were never published. Also, I refrained from indulging in complete fantasy. Caruso once hummed Tristan's death for James Huneker, who was tremendously moved by it. But there is no reason to suppose that Caruso would have tackled Wagner (he sang

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in a few performances of Lohengrin in South America in 1901--that was the extent of his career as heldentenor). Also, I avoided roles which Caruso sang hardly ever attempted (usually only at the beginning of his career), such as Arturo in I Puritani or Elvino in La Sonnambula.

Here are twelve items I wish Caruso had recorded instead of the items listed above:

1) "Il lamento di Federico" from L'Arlesiana (Cilea). Caruso created this part and I suspect he sang it superbly. The role was insignificant to his repertoire, but it would have made a great creator's record. Meanwhile we have great recordings of the aria by Bjoerling, Gigli, and Schipa.

2) Adriana Lecouvreur (Cilea)--either of the tenor arias. As a matter of fact, Caruso did record a snippet from the opera, accompanied by the composer himself. It's one of the tenor's strangest and rarest recordings. The title, "No, piú nobile," is part of a duet. No soprano was at the session, so the composer plays on and on after Caruso's solo until the engineer decided that enough was enough. Caruso created the part, and his failure to record the tenor arias adds to our loss.

3) "Ch'ella mi creda" and "Or son sei mesi" from La Fanciulla Del West. How baffling that neither of these was recorded to commemorate the most important role Caruso created! What were the folks at Victor (or Caruso) thinking? I have heard that Ricordi, the publisher, prohibited recordings outside of Europe for a few years after the premiere, which would explain why Caruso, Destinn, and Amato never recorded bits of the opera. From 1910 to 1914, singers in Europe recorded its arias--Zenatello, Linda Canetti, Bettino Cappelli, Amadeo Bassi, Taurino Parvis, others. In the U.S., Edward Johnson recorded "Ch'ella mi creda" on March 5, 1920 (Victor #64886--see William Moran's

discography in Ruby Mercer's The Tenor Of His Time). Caruso could have sung it in those last sessions!

4) Otello: The Love Duet. Francis Alda would have been the obvious choice as partner. I imagine a reason for not recording this is that the duet is fairly long and would have required two sides. But this did not stop Caruso from recording the final Aida duet with Gadski on two sides, nor the big duet "Invano, Alvaro . . . Le minaccie" from La Forza Del Destino with Amato. It cannot be argued that the reason for omitting the Otello duet was that it was not in his repertoire. Caruso recorded several selections from Forza long before the role entered his repertoire. Moreover, Caruso never sang Otello on stage yet he did record--superbly--two other excerpts.



At the Age of 21



At the Age of 46

5) "Quanto e bella" from L'Elisir D'Amore. Caruso recorded "Una furtiva" so many times that it's a pity he never thought Nemorino's Act I aria worth including.

6) Aida: Nile scene complete with Gadske (or Destinn) and Amato. In the late acoustical period Martinelli and Ponselle recorded this, and the performances are magnificent. For Caruso to record the Nile scene, four to six 12-inch sides would have been required, especially if the Aida/Amonasro scene was included (Amato and Gadske did record it). What a treasure it would have been!

7) "Un tal gioco" and "Un grande spettacolo!" from I Pagliacci. Actually, Victor should have recorded the whole darned opera with Caruso, but Victor never did complete operas in those days. If the Gramophone Co. could do it in 1907 in Italy with a so-so cast, imagine the results if Victor had given it to us with Caruso, Amato or Scotti, and (my choice) Alma Gluck.

8) "Parigi, o cara" from La Traviata with Alma Gluck. This would be the perfect companion piece to their "Libiamo" from the same opera.

9) "Il mio tesoro" from Don Giovanni. It was in Caruso's repertoire, at least in London, and at least until 1904. My grandfather heard Caruso in this opera. George Bernard Shaw wrote unkind things about Caruso's performance. I've been curious.

10) Les Huguenots: Act IV duet with Emmy Destinn. This would have to be another two-disc recording, I'm afraid, but I sure would like to hear it. Caruso may not have been Jean de Reszke, but he must have sounded wonderful in this big, very grand opera scene. Destinn recorded this selection with Karl Jorn, which is partly why I chose her. Another reason to choose Destinn is that she only made one released recording (three altogether) with Caruso.

11) Lucia Di Lammermoor: Final scene. Many other tenors recorded it; I wish Caruso had.

12) Der Rosenkavalier: Italian Tenor's Aria, Act I. This is, I suppose, a bit of a cheat since the part was never in Caruso's repertoire. Legend has it, however, that he was approached to sing this at the world premiere, but someone decided his fee was too much for such a small part, so nothing came of the idea. I can only wish . . .

A constant theme in books about Caruso is that he was a tremendously conscientious artist and his own toughest critic. Other singers were unanimous in saying that he was the perfect colleague. He never tried to hog the limelight. It's arguable that he was as great as he was because he worked harder at singing than anyone else.

Caruso left a legacy filled with great performances. He recorded at least one selection from virtually his entire active operatic repertoire. It is a tribute to his thoroughness as an artist that he also explored works not in his repertoire--Otello, Lo Schiavo, Salvator Rosa, Leoncavallo's La Boheme--and recorded a number of songs that at first glance seem surprising choices but are done beautifully, such as "Pimpinella" and "A la luz de la luna," his only published record with Emilio de Gogorza. Who does not enjoy Caruso's bouncy, ardent performance of George M. Cohan's "Over There"?

If you collect 78s and don't play Caruso, you are missing a most important and enjoyable artist. Just don't start with the twelve records I listed at the beginning of this piece! Caruso's position in the history of singing is the same as Babe Ruth's in the history of baseball, and even the Babe struck out once in a while!

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BRIEF NOTES ON VICTOR MATRIX NUMBERS

By William R. Moran

I am startled every now and then by finding questions raised about issues that I thought had been discussed in print ad nauseam years ago. Recurring questions show that there is indeed a new generation of collectors, and also that much of what many of us wrote years ago must have been of an ephemeral nature, long ago lost in the pages of Hobbies, The Record Collector, The Gramophone, the Bulletins of the IRCC, and other places where such matters were covered.

I have always felt that along with collecting records themselves, we must build up a library of background material. Since some of this material may now be hard to come by for new collectors, I suppose inevitably some matters get discussed again and again. I'll add some informal notes here that may prove useful for those who are new to the field.

I believe strongly that all collectors should use the correct form for Victor matrix numbers. The matrix number consists of three parts: the letter prefix, serial number, and take.

The letter prefix tells the size of the recording. For example, A = 7"; B = 10"; C = 12"; D = 14"; E = 8". After 1925 the letter prefix indicated if a recording was electrical or acoustical. Still later the prefix told much more. It told the type of recording head used (VE = Western Electric; RC = RCA) and also the place of recordings. "P" was for the Pacific Coast, so PBVE was a 10" electrical recording made (in the early years) in Oakland, later Hollywood.

We are still working out some of the prefixes used in the late 1930s and 1940s, which is one reason I have never felt ready for a definitive article on these.

But those who have HMV pressings of Victor records should know that HMV substituted "A" (meaning American origin) for all U.S. matrix numbers. When the HMV usage and the proper Victor usage are mixed up, it is no wonder that collectors are confused. Take Barry R. Ashpole's "Ten Most Played" list from Issue 3 of Victrola and 78 Journal (page 31). We have "A41075/43616" when these should read "CVE-41075-2/CVE-43616-1." In his list we find a mixture of A's and CVE's or B's or C's, depending on if the pressing in his collection is a Victor or an HMV, which does not help identify the recording in question.

The second part of the Victor matrix number is the serial number, which cannot stand alone. It must have a prefix and also the third part of the matrix number: the take. Thus, Mr. Ashpole's "A41233" should read "CVE-41233-1" or "CVE-41233-3." Both were issued by Victor on Cat. No. 10012, but only Take 3 was issued by HMV on DQ-102. Since his is an HMV pressing, it must be Take 3. This is the right way to list a matrix number, which indicates a specific recording. To list it otherwise is inexact. Different takes are different recordings, sometimes made years apart. They often play at different speeds.

If we are going to work out recording (thus playback) speeds and then publish them, we must specifically identify the recording we are working with, and to do that we need the full and complete matrix number as well as the catalog number. As the take number isn't always shown, we need to point out musical (or physical) differences between differing takes so that the user knows just what is in hand, or in the case of LP or CD transfers, exactly which record was transcribed.

The whole matter of recording speeds was cussed and discussed in article after article when LPs first came out, and it was argued loud and long if the older recordings were being transcribed correctly. Some of us made so much noise about this that it caught on. I think responsible producers of today's CDs at least try to determine the correct pitch, or speed. Certainly correct pitch is a concern to the majority of serious reviewers and to a certain segment of the public. I hope we don't ever have to go back over all that discussion!

Anyone interested in the history of the discussion will find many articles in Hobbies and spirited exchanges in the Toronto publication called Record News. See Volume 1, Number 6 (Feb. 1957) as well as Volume 2, Number 5 (Jan. 1958) through Volume 2, Number 8 (Apr. 1958).



The Haag Way

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Incidentally, the matrix number may shed light on the unknown baritone who sings "Le barbare tribu . . . O casto fior" from Il Re di Lahore, mentioned by David Banks in Issue 3 of V78J (page 18). The matrix number is "18R," which falls right in the middle of a recording session that took place in Francesco Tamagno's villa in February, 1903 in Ospedaletti, Susa, near Turin in Italy. There is also a ten-inch solo by no doubt the same baritone and it falls in the midst of a group of 10" Tamagno recordings.

Who is the unidentified baritone who was allowed not only to be present but to record in Tamagno's home? I doubt if we will ever know for sure, but my guess (believe me, it is only a guess!) is that this is the voice of a Tamagno brother, Giovanni, who was a baritone and who had to abort a stage career because he was afflicted with stage fright.

The Old Way

LOOKING through envelope after envelope of old and new records trying to find the selection your guest has requested and very often compelled to give up in disappointment and chagrin.

AFRICAN AMERICAN RECORDING PIONEERS

By Jas Obrecht

The early years of commercial recording were dominated by comedians and actors, preachers, after-dinner speakers, and "studio" singers, instrumentalists, and bands. Nearly all of the pioneering recording artists were white, with a few outstanding exceptions. The most notable, George W. Johnson, was a former Virginia plantation slave who made his recording debut in 1890 with the New York Phonograph Co. and the New Jersey Phonograph Co., and went on to record for Edison, Columbia, Victor, Berliner, Zonophone, Bettini, Kansas City Talking Machine, and other labels. (An article devoted to George Johnson will appear in Issue #5 of V78J.)

Louis Vasnier, an African American banjo player, recorded for the Louisiana Phonograph Company around 1891. Little is known of him.

The first known commercial sound recordings of a group of African American singers, the Unique Quartette, were made by the New York Phonograph Co. in December 1890. Based in New York, the group had played variety, the bawdy forerunner of vaudeville, and toured in blackface with the Georgia Colored Minstrels and Primrose and West Minstrels. Their only known surviving track, "Mamma's Black Baby Boy," was recorded in 1893 as Edison cylinder 694 and likely featured lead singer Joseph M. Moore, tenor William H. Tucker, baritone J.E. Carsons, and Samuel G. Baker. An 1896 catalog by the Phonograph Record and Supply Co. of New York City advertised a tantalizing selection of a half-dozen of their cylinders.

Between 1891 and '97, Chicago's Standard Quartette made dozens of cylinders released by the New York

Phonograph Co., the Columbia Phonograph Co., the Ohio Phonograph Co., and the U.S. Phonograph Co. of New Jersey. Its members were probably Ed De Moss, H.C. Williams, Rufus Scott, and William Cottrell. Gifted with beautiful, mournful voices, the men were sophisticated professionals on tour with the African American musical *The South Before The War*. Their 1894 and '95 Columbia selections included "Old Aunt Jemima," "Little Alabama Coon,"

- 911 El Capitan March, (from the opera.)
- 912 Directorate March, (Sousa.)

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"Way Down Yonder In The Cornfield," and "Nationality Medley," but only two samples of these cylinders are known to exist. Their rendition of the spiritual "Keep Movin'" is in poor shape but moving nonetheless; the other surviving selection is "Every Day'll Be Sunday Bye And Bye." The Standard Quartette recorded at least one Columbia cylinder with a white female, Jessie Oliver.

In 1898, two banjo players billed as Cousins & De Moss recorded "Poor Mourner," a secular piece with gospel origins. This Berliner likely featured Ed De Moss. Around this time, basso Thomas Craig recorded for Berliner.

BERT WILLIAMS

On October 11, 1901, Bert Williams and his partner George Walker cut a series of Victor seven-inch and ten-inch discs in New York City. With pianist C.H. Booth providing simple, unadorned accompaniment, the duo began with "I Don't Like That Face You Wear." Singing in a clear, confident voice with a minstrel-approved "coon" accent, Bert then cut several sides on his own: Cole and Johnson's "In My Castle On The River Nile," as well as "Where Was Moses When The Light Went Out," "The Ghost Of A Coon," and "All Going Out And Nothing Coming In."

While Williams and Walker's music for this latter track is pure Tin Pan Alley, their lyrics express a sentiment that would reemerge in the famous blues song "Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out." Bert had performed "All Going Out And Nothing Coming In" in the musical revue *Sons Of Ham*:

*Money is de root of evil,
Everywhere you go,
But nobody have any objection
To de root, now ain't dat so?
You know how it is wid money,
How it makes you feel at ease,*

*Things look bright all around,
And your friends am thick as
bees.
But, oh! When yo' money is
a-runnin' low,
An' you clinging to a solitary
dime,
No one can see where you come
in,
Dat am de awful time*

Another of the session's superior sides was Bert's satire on reading the bumps on a person's head, "The Phrenologist Coon," written by Bert Williams and Ernest Hogan. This wonderful bit of shuck and jive was likewise part of *Sons Of Ham*:

*I can tell you what you are by
the feelin' of your bones,
In the mystery of yo' future
I'll certainly make you jump,
When I have an inspiration all
the future I can see,
I can tell you what you are or
was or what you goin' to be*

Volume One of Pearl's four-volume CD series *Music From The New York Stage (1890 - 1920)* features both of these rare Bert Williams discs.

The Victor catalog advertised: "The most popular songs of the day are the 'Rag Time' or 'Coon Songs.' The greatest recommendation a song of this kind can have is that it is sung by Williams & Walker, the 'Two Real Coons.' Their selections are always from the brightest and best songs with the most catchy and pleasing melodies. Although Williams & Walker have been engaged to make records exclusively for us at the highest price ever paid in the history of the Talking Machine business, and although their records are the finest thing ever produced, being absolutely the real thing, we add them to our regular record list with no advance in price."

Seven-inchers were a half-dollar, ten-inchers a dollar. The catalog singled out "Good Morning, Carrie," claiming, "Williams' side remarks and exclamations make this

one of the funniest records we have ever produced." "All Going Out And Nothing Coming In" is called "the cleverest coon song ever written." While in London with the musical *In Dahomey*, Bert recorded "The Cake Walk," an unissued G&T side.

Co-written with Alex Rogers, Bert's signature song, "Nobody," was first recorded by Arthur Collins in 1905 and recut by Bert in 1906. The record proved to be a mixed blessing for the man Columbia advertised as "the Ethiopian baritone." "Before I got through with 'Nobody,'" Williams wrote in *American Magazine*, January 1918, "I could have wished that both the author of the words and the assembler of the tune had been strangled or drowned or talked to death. For seven whole years I had to sing it. Month after month I tried to drop it and sing something new, but I could get nothing to replace it, and the audiences seemed to want nothing else. Every comedian at some time in his life learns to curse the particular stunt of his that was most popular."

With the success of "Nobody," Bert Williams became an exclusive Columbia recording artist. Bert tried to capitalize on its success with "Somebody," "Unexpectedly," and "Not Lately," songs which recycled the "Nobody" motif of a dramatically intoned, one- or two-word catch phrase. "Nobody" was rerecorded by Perry Como and Bing Crosby.

DINWIDDIE COLORED QUARTET

A year after the Victor company held the first Williams and Walker sessions, the company recorded Virginia's soulful Dinwiddie Colored Quartet, composed of first tenor Sterling Rex, second Tenor J. Clarence Meredith, first bass Harry Cruder, and second bass James Mantell Thomas. The group's October 29,

1902, Monarch/Victor session reportedly took place at Tenth and Lombard Streets in Philadelphia. The quartet's first selection, "Down On The Old Camp Ground," was introduced by an announcer as a "coon song." Spirituals with the occasional comic verse, most of the quartet's half dozen one-sided discs echoed the bygone century, although "Poor Mourner" jumped to a very hip arrangement with an African backbeat and harmonic passages that would flow straight into doo-wop and modern pop.

Formed to raise funds for a private African American school in Dinwiddie, Virginia, the Dinwiddie Quartet was touring vaudeville with Ernest Hogan and Billy McClain's *The Smart Set* when they made their discs, and lasted as a group until 1904. Afterwards, Sterling Rex enjoyed a successful concert career in Philadelphia. Few Dinwiddie discs were pressed, and today they're quite rare. Meanwhile, stacks of recordings by the American Quartet, Criterion Quartet, Peerless Quartet, Hayden Quartet, and dozens of other white studio singers were sold.

WILBUR SWEATMAN

A veteran of Mahara's Minstrels and W.C. Handy's band, clarinetist Wilbur C. Sweatman recalled fronting a sextet on a 1903 cylinder recording of Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag," which is rumored to have been issued in small numbers by Minneapolis' Metropolitan Music Store. Sweatman resumed his recording career with Emerson Records in 1916, cutting "My Hawaiian Sunshine" with the so-called Emerson Symphony Orchestra (actually just a few musicians) and his own "Down Home Rag" with the Emerson String Trio. The following spring Wilbur Sweatman And His Jass Band waxed six instrumentals for Pathé, notably "Joe Turner Blues" and "Boogie Rag," which is not a boogie woogie piece. Sweatman mined new

blues veins the following year, recording "Regretful Blues" and "Ev'rybody's Crazy 'Bout The Doggone Blues, But I'm Happy" for Columbia. In his prime, Sweatman was famous for playing three clarinets at once.

C. CARROLL CLARK

C. Carroll Clark recorded for Columbia between 1908 and '10, singing in a clear, plaintive voice above orchestra or strum-and-wail banjo accompaniment. Able to sing both tenor and baritone, Clark covered songs expressing a longing for the antebellum South, such as Will Hays' "De Little Old Log Cabin In De Lane," Septimus Winner's arrangement of "Carry Me Back To Tennessee," and several Stephen Foster tunes. Other titles were of the "coon" variety--"Doan Ye Cry, Ma Honey," "Daddy's Pickaninny Boy," and "Sleep Time, Mah Honey." A pre-1910 Columbia catalog described him as "probably the best singer of old plantation melodies anywhere to be found" and boasted that Clark was "a favorite of all Columbia users."

Born in Indiana around 1885 and raised in Denver, Carroll Clark spent many years in New York City, where he sang in restaurants, clubs, and churches and worked for a while at the Music School Settlement for Colored People. During the '20s he made several non-blues race records issued by Black Swan and Paramount, and in 1923 he recorded for Columbia. His Black Swan release of "Nobody Knows De Trouble I've Seen" featured "F. Hamilton Henderson, Jr.," who would become famous as Fletcher Henderson. With piano accompaniment, he waxed Harry Burleigh's arrangements of "By An' By" and "Oh! It Didn't Rain," the spiritual "I Stood On De Ribber Ob Jordan," and a tenor version of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" that came out on Paramount and Champion credited to the Norfolk Jubilee Quartette. The fate of this fine, forgotten singer is uncertain.

OTHER PIONEERS

While touring the Northeast under the leadership of Prof. John Wesley Work, the Fisk University Jubilee Quartet inaugurated their

CONGRATULATIONS

Listed by Victor Talking Machine Co.
as

CASTLE'S LAME DUCK WALTZ. JAMES REESE EUROPE

Arr. by J. Louis von der Mehden, Jr.

INTRODUCTION
Moderato con moto

Piano *mf*

THE SHEET MUSIC OF FRANK MCKEE'S ONCE-POPULAR "CÉCILE WALTZ" (1914) PROMOTED EUROPE'S "CASTLE'S LAME DUCK WALTZ" ON ITS BACK PAGE. FRANK MCKEE, JIM EUROPE, AND FORD DABNEY WROTE AND PLAYED MUSIC FOR DANCING TEAM IRENE AND VERNON CASTLE.

recording career in December 1909 with five double-sided Victor releases featuring spirituals, "Old Black Joe," and two readings of Paul L. Dunbar poems by second tenor James A. Myers. Noah Walker Ryder and Alfred Garfield King participated in the session, although King quit the Quartet soon afterwards.

The Fisk quartet made a few more Edison Amberol cylinders in 1912, with Work leading L.P. O'Hara, Charles Wesley, and renowned tenor Roland W. Hayes. Released just before the company's switch to Blue Amberol cylinders, these 1912 releases were only sold for a few months and are very scarce today. That same year, the Apollo Male Quartette recorded four serious spiritual sides in the classic concert style for Columbia.

A few early Fisk records were issued under the pseudonym "Southern Four" on Edison Diamond Discs. In 1914 the Fisk University Jubilee Quartet signed with Columbia Records, which provided better distribution. The 1917 Victor Records catalog listed several of their sides, calling them "quaint and interesting numbers. Some touch the heart with their pathos; and some, although intensely religious, sometimes excite to laughter by their quaint conceptions of Biblical facts."

Between 1914 and '16, the touring Tuskegee Institute Singers made about twenty "double quartet" recordings for Victor. Victor's 1917 catalog listed these selections as "Negro folk-songs" and proclaimed that the Tuskegee Institute Singers "sing these inherited old 'Spirituals,' as did their grandfathers, in deep reverential spirit, with all the native, peculiar richness of tone-coloring and harmonies that make these songs of real use in an educational and historical sense." Tenor Alvin J. Neely, who led the octet during these sessions, also led on the Tuskegee Quartet's sublime 1926 and '27 Victor sides.

Recording for Victor in March 1909, Charley Case won high praise for his monologues ridiculing the sobbing, sentimental ballads of the 1880s and '90s. A lawyer turned blackfaced vaudevillian, he was born John Cass in Lockport, New York, and changed his name when audiences began calling him "Jack Cass." A master of the deadpan delivery, Case typically began his monologues by chanting a brief moralistic ballad with a surprise twist, followed by a pseudo-recitation with even more twists. His best-known monologues, "A Warning To Boys" and "A Warning To Girls," were resurrected by Vernon Dalhart on Columbia in 1928.

A few other spoken recordings by eminent African Americans were issued in very small quantities. Reciter Edward Sterling Wright made three Blue Amberols. Booker T. Washington, author of *Up From Slavery*, recorded part of his Atlanta Exposition speech on a Columbia Personal Recording in 1908; years later the track was reissued by the Broome label. The August 1914 issue of *Sound Wave* reported that Jack Johnson, the first Negro boxer to hold the World Heavyweight title, made a two-part recording of "Physical Culture" a few days after whupping Frank Moran. A photo depicted the champ in front of the recording horn. A few years later, Marcus Garvey spoke on record.

By 1910, many black performers had been recorded in Cuba, Brazil, and Puerto Rico. Pete Hampton, who recorded in Germany and England, could well have been the most prolific African American recording artist before Bessie Smith. On the U.S. mainland, though, sessions featuring African Americans were still rare and integrated sessions even rarer. With their March 1910 Edison releases, Polk Miller and his all-black Old South Quartette provided an exception. (Look for an article on Polk Miller & The Old South Quartette in an upcoming V78J.)

In March 1914 a mixed chorus billed as the Afro-American Folk Song Singers recorded Will Marion Cook's "Swing Along" and "Rain Song" (Columbia A-1538). In what's believed to be his only appearance at a recording session, Cook directed the group himself. Formed in 1913 by Mrs. Harriet Gibbs Marshall, president of the District of Columbia's Washington Conservatory of Music, the Afro-American Folk Song Singers had performed in Washington and New York the winter before their session. Harry T. Burleigh and actress Abbie Mitchell, who concertized with the Singers, may appear on these sides.

Almost four minutes in length, their "Swing Along" was considered a critical piece of black self-affirmation.

The Right Quintette, an African American cabaret act formed by James E. Lightfoot circa 1912, released a lively version of "The Rain Song" in 1915 as Columbia A-1957. The flip side was Will Marion Cook's "Exhortation." A veteran of Williams and Walker revues, Lightfoot had fronted the Right Quintette at important venues such as the Manhattan Casino and Lafayette Theater. Among the group's members was James Mantell Thomas, who had sung on the 1902 Dinwiddie recordings.



JAS OBRECHT FOUND THIS OKEH TEST PRESSING OF LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND HIS HOT FIVE AT A FLEA MARKET IN MARIN. THIS TAKE OF "YES! I'M IN THE BARREL" WAS PUBLISHED. IT WAS RECORDED ON NOVEMBER 12, 1925.

Cashing in on the dance craze sparked by Irene and Vernon Castle, James Reese Europe's Society Orchestra made ten Victor sides between December 1913 and October '14, Europe's famous compositions "Castle Walk" and "Castle House Rag" among them. Soon several similar orchestras were started. "But there was no comparison," claimed Henry L. Grant in the July 1921 issue of *The Negro Musician*, "for there was only one Europe, and there was something about the subtle rhythmic responsiveness of his organization that defied analysis."

With the outbreak of World War I, Lt. James Europe put his organizational genius to work, scouring the country for talent for his 369th Infantry Band. Player by player, Europe built a truly magnificent outfit that, in Grant's estimation, "ranked with the great bands of the world. These men covered themselves and their leader with glory. Europe went wild over them. France idolized them. They made American Negro rhythms popular all over the world." During March and May 1919, Lt. Jim Europe's 369th ("Hell Fighters") Band recorded two dozen band selections for the Pathé label.

A male chorus identified as Jim Europe's Singing Serenaders sang four spiritual sides at the March sessions, with Creighton Thompson leading on "Exhortation (Jubilee Shout)" and Noble Sissle fronting "Little David Play On Your Harp." At the May sessions, the Four Harmony Kings, a veteran vaudeville troupe featuring founder Will Hann, first tenor Ivan Harold Browning, second tenor William Berry, and baritone Charles E. Drayton, recorded "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "One More Ribber To Cross," which Pathé 22187 identified as being by Jim Europe's Four Harmony Kings. These titles and others have been reissued on the Document CD *The Earliest Negro Vocal Groups Vol. 2*.

Eubie Blake launched his dis-

tinguished recording career during the summer of 1917 with Pathé's Eubie Blake Trio sides. During September 1917, W.C. Handy's Orchestra Of Memphis waxed several instrumental rags and blues for Columbia. In 1919 Lyratone announced the release of his famous "Beale Street Blues," "Joe Turner Blues," "Hesitating Blues," and "Yellow Dog Blues," but apparently these sides were never issued. In November 1917, Ford Dabney's band recorded "The Jass 'Lazy Blues'" for Aeolian Vocalion.

In 1918, renowned tenor Roland Hayes made a pioneering series of Columbia Personals, covering both operatic and spiritual selections. During 1919, clarinetist Achille Baquet recorded Dixieland with Jimmy Durante, the Biddle University Quintet or Quartet made four Pathé sides, and Opal Cooper recorded for Pathé. The release of Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues" the following summer inaugurated a mad scramble to record African American blueswomen.

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Three Musicians of Europe's Hell Fighters' Band, with their battle scarred instruments

LT. JIM EUROPE chose Pathé records to perpetuate his music because he knew that every detail of his wonderful jazzing would be accurately reproduced. On Pathé records, you hear every moan of the trombones, every roar of the saxophones, every shrill note of the clarinets. The swing of the rhythm, and the fascination of the Jazzing make you want to dance. You won't, you can't sit still.

Pathé records are played with the famous Sapphire Ball. No needles to change, always ready to play. Every Pathé record is guaranteed to play 1,000 times.

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20 GRAND AVENUE BROOKLYN, N. Y.

*You can play Pathé Records on any Phonograph.
Let us show you how.*

LIEUT. JIM EUROPE'S "HELL FIGHTERS" 369TH INFANTRY JAZZ BAND

The Return of the Colors
(Two colored regiments that distinguished themselves on the field of honor have just returned to this country.)

See dem bay'nets flash and flicker!

Boy! dat jazz hits me like licker!

Hear 'em whale dem kettle-drums—

Whee! dat cullud reg'ment comes!

Clash! Thud! Bang! Zing! Babe, ma heart does surely sing!

Halleluia! See dem knives! Carve me a bit o' Kaiser's gizzard—

Say, I'm sorry for dem Bushes' wives—

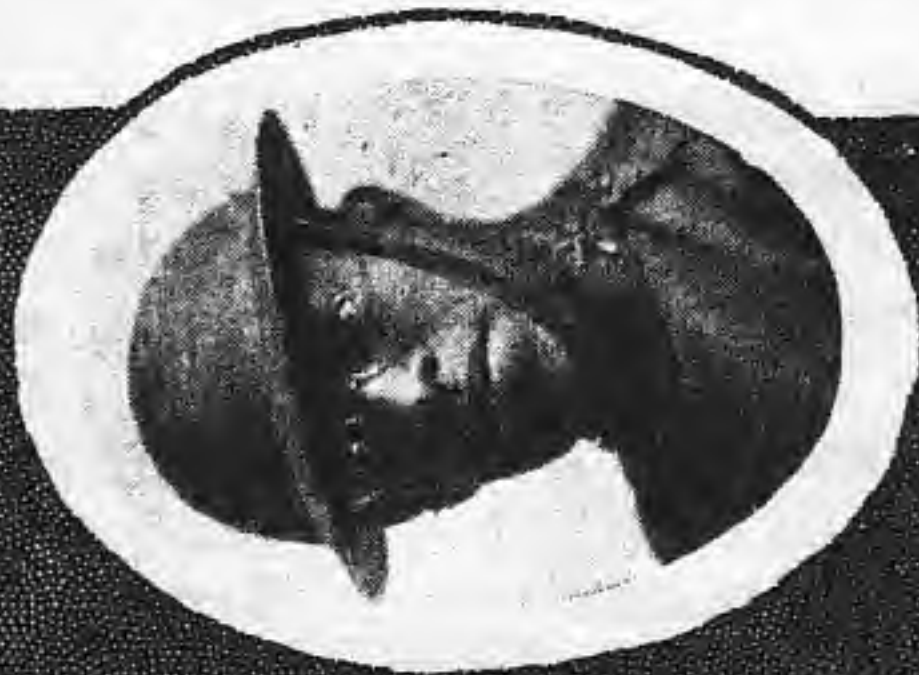
Dere's Jim Europe, he's de wizard.

See Jim Europe lead dat band! Ohe, de wail of dem trom-bones!

Kid, I'd eat right outa his hand—

Click, clack, rattle de bones!

By CHRISTOPHER MORLEY,
in Philadelphia Evening Ledger.



**NOW ON
SALE**

LATEST

Pathé RECORDS

LIEUT. JIM EUROPE'S 369TH INFANTRY JAZZ BAND

By Floyd Levin

Recently, while searching through my files for an elusive item, I found a small folder published in 1919 by Pathé Freres Phonograph Co., Brooklyn, New York. Its yellowing pages listed eleven recordings by Lieut. Jim Europe's "Hell Fighters" 369th Infantry Jazz Band. The records are priced at eighty five cents each. The folder is duplicated before and after this page.

The tunes listed in the catalog were recorded within a few weeks of Lieut. Europe returning to the U.S. after leading his Hell Fighters Band in France during World War I. The numbers are from three of Europe's 1919 Pathé recording sessions. Several of these tunes remain in the repertoire of dixieland bands: "Darktown Strutters' Ball," "Ja Da," and three by W.C. Handy, namely "Memphis Blues," "Hesitating Blues," and "St. Louis Blues."

Europe's 1919 version was probably the first of thousands of recordings of "St. Louis Blues." Al Bernard recorded it later in 1919 for Edison. The Original Dixieland Jazz Band recorded it for Victor in 1921 and had a hit with the tune. Handy recorded it the following year. Bands continue to record it.

Personnel of the band, as identified in Brian Rust's Jazz Records: 1897-1942, includes Noble Sissle on violin, Herb Flemming on trombone, Russell Smith on trumpet.

Herb Flemming was only 19 at the time and his career continued until his death in 1976. During those years, he performed with Earl Hines, Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Tommy Dorsey. Russell Smith became an outstanding lead trumpet player during the big band era two decades later.

Noble Sissle, who later with partner Eubie Blake achieved world

fame, had worked with Europe's Society Orchestra before the war. Ads for this band referred to James Reese Europe as the "Paderewski of Syncopation." His orchestra entertained wealthy New Yorkers at posh venues, including Delmonico's and the Hotel Astor. Early Victor records by Europe's Society Orchestra helped sustain the Ragtime Era.

When the U.S. entered WWI, Sissle and Europe enlisted in the army together and organized a regimental band, the first contingent of Negro soldiers to serve in the war.

One number listed in the Pathé catalog, "On Patrol In No Man's Land," written by Europe and Sissle during their tenure in the battle zones, had been a favorite of American soldiers overseas. After the Armistice, Pathé capitalized on the song's popularity as the "doughboys" returned to the U.S. The song was recorded in March of 1919. Due to the song's success, Jim Europe's band was booked on an elaborate tour of the country.

Europe died on May 9, 1919 in Boston after an upset and unstable drummer, Herbert Wright, entered the band leader's dressing room and, in the presence of the Four Harmony Kings and Noble Sissle, stabbed Europe with a penknife. Tragically, James Reese Europe died within two months of recording the numbers that Pathé advertised in its 1919 folder. The fullest account of this strange murder--and of Europe's life and career--is in Reid Badger's 1995 biography of Europe called A Life In Ragtime (Oxford University Press). Badger's book will be reviewed in a coming issue of V78J.

The elusive item that provoked my search is still mired in a mountain of material that I will properly file--one of these days!

FLOYD LEVIN LIVES IN STUDIO CITY, CALIFORNIA.


COME
INSIDE
AND HEAR

JIM
EUROPE'S
JAZZ
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REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.



PATHÉ FRÈRES PHONOGRAPH CO.

E. A. WIDMANN, President

EIGHT POPULAR VICTOR ARTISTS

By Tim Gracyk

In the third issue of V78J, I quoted this from Brian Rust's The Victor Master Book: "The first Orthophonic Victor record to appear was No. 19626." The Mask and Wig Club Double Male Quartet and Orchestra recorded "Joan Of Arkansas" on March 16, 1925. Rust notes, "It was made in [Victor's] fifth-floor studios, Building 15."

William Moran wrote to V78J that collectors should make a distinction between the first electrical recording issued and the earliest electrical recording made and then eventually issued. One of the very first Victor experiments with electrical recording was issued on a 12" disc with the title "A Miniature Concert--Part 1/2" (Victor 35753). Featuring the Eight Popular Victor Artists, it was issued later than some other electrics. The official release date was May 29, 1925.

Moran also sent an announcement from 1924 for a Los Angeles concert starring this Victor team. Since the program was issued (and concert performed) around the time that "A Miniature Concert" was recorded, the same artists are on the program and disc, which I stress since personnel of the Eight Popular Victor Artists changed over the years.

Moran's program, aside from a back page listing records, is duplicated on the next pages of V78J. In 1924, September 21 fell on a Sunday. The program had been printed a few months earlier in June. Managed by Henry Burr, the group toured until the late 1920s and was also known as the Eight Famous Victor Artists.

Performed at Camden on February 26, 1925, "A Miniature Concert" was something of an experiment. As Robert Baumbach notes in Look For The Dog, the performance was one of several test recordings made both acoustically and electrically for comparison. Victor executives judged the electrical version good enough

for regular matrix numbers to be assigned (CVE-31874-3 and CVE-31875-4). Rust does not list the disc.

For years I have enjoyed this record. I can cite the opening chorus because of many listenings:

How d'ya do?
We beg of you
To listen once again.
We're here because
We're here to entertain you.
"His Master's Voice" was calling
So here we are again
To demonstrate
What's on the Victor menu.
You'll find our bill of fare
Is flavored with some jazz . . .

Perhaps these lyrics were penned for the recording experiment, or this could be what the group sang at concerts. The several solo performances that last a mere minute were clearly tailored for the recording, which is a mini concert.

Billy Murray provides terse yet fun introductions for these short musical performances, as in this example: "Mrs. Banta's boy Frankie will play 'Strut Miss Lizzie' by Henry Ford." Frank Banta then plays for 17 seconds with great exuberance. Who can blame Banta for being excited? A new kind of recording was finally capturing the nuances of his performances. The acoustic process did not do full justice to the piano.

After other numbers, Billy Murray zips through "Casey Jones" in 26 seconds and then ends side A by announcing, "We'll see you on the other side." The others intone, "Turn over!" Rudy Wiedoeft is eventually allowed to "smoke" on his sax for nearly a minute. I feel the one weak moment is a monologue by Monroe Silver, whose jokes do not hold up well seventy years later (he says of his boy in college, "He must be studying languages 'cause last week I got a bill--\$60 for Scotch!").

John H. Meyer, not to be confused with J.W. Myers, sings in the Sterling Trio and Peerless Quartet--he does not get a solo turn.

Billy Murray might have sounded less excited if he had foreseen his own popularity decline as studios switched to electric recording. A few developments could account for the decline. The microphone captured qualities that the acoustic process hid, and this was not to Murray's benefit. The early electric process itself had flaws, and though bugs were fixed, some career damage had been done. The microphone opened the door for a new crooning style, which made Murray's singing seem dated, partly since composers wrote new kinds of songs. Perhaps the voice was not the instrument it once was.

Victor urged Murray to adjust to changing fashions, and to an extent Murray did. Jim Walsh reports that Victor executive Eddie King insisted that Murray sing "Roll 'Em, Girls" in a crooning manner. The disc (#19838) dismayed Murray fans.

In the June 1942 issue of Hobbies, Jim Walsh summarizes the effect of the new recording: "Many tenor voices, such as Billy's, suffered severely from the pioneer electric recording. It gave them a husky, raspy edge of a spurious baritone quality . . . By 1928 the crooner vogue had so taken the field that Billy, after 25 years of singing for Victor, was washed up with that company, aside from singing an occasional refrain or taking part in a minstrel sketch." Murray offered his services to Edison and others.

Before Murray was "washed up" (as Walsh puts it), Victor executives pigeonholed Murray as a partner for Aileen Stanley, then in her twenties. The two voices blended well in comic duets about sweethearts, and the records sold well. These electric duets find Murray singing in a more intimate way, evidence that he did adapt. But this was an odd pairing. Billy Murray, born in 1877, was old enough to be Stanley's father, yet in

song after song Murray plays a love-sick teen. Incidentally, on one disc Billy Murray truly holds back in a way he never could in the acoustic era: he literally whispers sweet-nothings for the opening of "Bridget O'Flynn" (BVE-36063-1).

Around the time the Eight Popular Victor Artists stopped touring, some Victor artists performed in an M-G-M Metro "Movietone Act." Bill Shaman reports that the short was copyrighted on 4 February, 1929 under the title Eight Victor Artists: At The Club and was most likely filmed in late 1928 or early 1929. He says all the M-G-M shorts have apparently survived, a happier fate than that of many Warner Brothers Vitaphones. The original negatives are said to exist and await restoration by the current copyright holder, Turner Broadcasting.

A Victor disc of the late 1920s featuring Billy Murray, Henry Burr, Frank Banta, and others is worth mentioning here since it takes the potpourri approach of "A Miniature Concert" and again breaks the performance into Part I/Part II. "Minstrel Show of 1929" (CVE-49077-5/CVE-49096-2) was released April 26, 1929. Walsh alluded to this disc.

That a minstrel show was recorded at this date is remarkable since everything here was out of fashion by 1929--tunes like "Down Where The Watermelon Grows" and the minstrel delivery ("Gentlemen, be seated"). Even the singers were out of fashion with the exception of the crooning Cavaliers and Frank Crumit, who sing in a '20s style (the Cavaliers blow a line in "Under the Bamboo Tree" but the session continues). Rust's Victor Master Book notes that this was recorded in January, 1929 in Liederkrantz Hall.



False Starts and Phantom Labels

A Look at Some Phonographic Lost Causes

by Allan Sutton

This is a look at what might have been.

Within the pages of the *Official Gazette* of the United States Patent Office are fascinating glimpses of both winners and losers in the American record industry. We are concerned here with the latter.

In compiling a list of phonograph-related trademarks recently, I was struck by the number of registered disc record brands that apparently never saw the light of day. The law allows a trademark to be registered if a bona fide *intention* to use the trademark exists,¹ but the mere filing of a trademark application does not ensure that a given brand was ever actually produced for general distribution or sale. In the course of my research, I uncovered dozens of claims filed for record labels that, to the best of my knowledge, were not issued commercially. For want of a better term, I've dubbed them "phantom labels."

In an upcoming issue, I'll present the complete list of phantoms uncovered for 1900–1930. Meanwhile, here are several of the most interesting examples.

John Prescott's "Twoforone" Champion Record

By 1907, the disc-record market was flooded with dozens of labels, many of them produced by the International Record Company, the American Record Company, Leeds & Catlin, and other companies operating with little concern for patents or licensing agreements. Victor and Columbia had waged legal battles against those companies for several years and by mid-1907 were gaining the upper hand.

It was not an auspicious time to enter the disc-record market, but John O. Prescott boldly registered his Champion Record trademark on February 24, 1908. John O., incidentally, was the brother of Frederick M. Prescott, founder of the International Talking Machine Company (Odeon) and sales agent for the American Record Company. Champion's "Twoforone" slogan implies a double-sided disc, possibly intended for licensure under under Ademor Petit's patent (#749,092) on a process for double-sided pressing. It probably was not coincidental that half-interest in that patent was owned by brother Frederick.



John Prescott's Champion trademark application
of February 24, 1908

Was Prescott's Champion Record ever produced? Given the climate created by further Victor and Columbia court victories in 1908 and 1909, it seems unlikely. The final vanquishing in 1909 of Leeds & Catlin, the most persistent of the patent infringers, had a chilling effect on aspiring competitors, and disc-record trademark registrations fell to barely perceptible levels from 1909 through 1914.

Pathé and the French-American Phonograph Distributors

1915 saw a gradual increase in disc record trademarks. Victor and Columbia continued to defend their markets, but new disc manufacturers found a way in. Beginning in 1910, two small companies marketed vertically cut discs, thus skirting the Berliner and Jones patents on lateral recording. The discs were played with a sapphire ball (à la Pathé) and were incompatible with standard lateral phonographs. Public acceptance was understandably slow, and two of the earliest producers—the Boston Talking Machine Company (makers of Phono-Cut and Colonial) and New York's Sapphire Record & Talking Machine



The French-American Phonograph Distributors, Inc. registered four complete label designs on a single day in September 1916, but none are known to have been produced commercially.

Company (makers of Princess)² were already fatalities when Pathé opened its American branch and began marketing vertically cut discs in 1914.

Almost from the start of its American venture, Pathé dabbled in subsidiary labels. On January 12, 1916, the company registered a label design for the

Sapphire label. The label did not carry a manufacturer's credit, although it did bear the telltale Pathé inscription, "For United States Consumption Only." Having never seen a Sapphire disc in thirty years of collecting, I assumed it to be a phantom. However, since first mentioning the label in an Appendix to *Directory of American Disc Record Brands and Manufacturers*, I've received verification of this rare label's existence from two collectors.

At some point in early-to-mid 1916, Pathé created or otherwise became involved with the French-American Phonograph Distributors, Inc. Like Pathé, French-American was incorporated in Wilmington, Delaware, but so far I have been unable to establish the exact nature of the company's connection to Pathé.

However, the connection is unmistakable. On September 1, 1916, French-American filed trademark applications on four complete label designs—Crystal Record, Jewel Record (unrelated the 1920s Plaza/ARC brand), Music Master Record, and Paradise Record—all based on Pathé's earlier Sapphire design. The trademark applications all claim use beginning August 25, 1916, but no copies have surfaced.

French-American registered two additional labels on September 8, 1916, again claiming use beginning August 25. The first, Bell, is clearly unrelated to the familiar W.T. Grant dime-store brand of the 1920s. But the second, Crescent, poses something of a problem. There was indeed a Crescent label produced during this period, and at one point it drew on Pathé masters.³ The label pictured in the French-American trademark application, bears no resemblance to the actual product, which was marketed by the Crescent Talking Machine Company of New York. I will therefore continue to classify the French-American version of the label as a phantom.

The French-American Phonograph Distributors seemed to vanish as suddenly as they had appeared. Pathé's next phantom, Hillandale Record, was registered in Pathé's own name, and French-American vanishes from the pages of the *Gazette* at this point. The Hillandale label—registered on April 12, 1917 with use claimed since March 30 of that year—is an elaborately designed affair depicting an alpine landscape, but like its predecessors, it has yet to surface.

Pathé, of course, went on to become a major supplier of custom labels in the 1920s. Why the company would put such effort into designing and registering these seven labels, only to withhold them from production, remains an intriguing mystery.

Resona vs. Resona

In February 1919, the Milwaukee Talking Machine Company took a full-page ad in *The Literary Digest* to announce its new line of Resona phonographs. The company dutifully registered its trademark on February 4, 1919, claiming use on phonographs and records since January 10 of that year. Stanley E. Roth, company secretary, had high hopes for his new line and actively solicited inquiries from wholesalers.

What Milwaukee Talking Machine apparently did not know was that the Charles Williams Stores were already marketing Resona products, although Williams had not formally registered the trademark.

Within six weeks, Milwaukee's Resona phonographs had vanished from the scene. When the company next took an ad in *The Literary Digest*, on March 15, 1919, its product line was renamed Dàlion, and an explanation appeared in minuscule type: "The Resona...name has been voluntarily discontinued because of its similarity to the brand of another phonograph with which this company is in no way connected." As far as can be ascertained, the Milwaukee Talking Company never issued any records under the Resona label.⁴

Dime-Store Phantoms

1917–1920 were boom years for the phonograph industry as manufacturers and dealers rushed to register hundreds of trademarks for records, machines, and accessories. The recession of 1921–1922 and subsequent radio craze brought a general shaking-out within the industry. Among the survivors were the New York Recording Laboratories, Plaza Music Company, and the Cameo Record Corporation, all of which registered phantom labels.

The New York Recording Laboratories are remembered today as producers of some of the rarest and most sought-after jazz and blues records, but when NYRL registered its Metropolitan trademark on February 10, 1921, the company had barely begun to dabble in the race-record market. Although NYRL's 1921 catalog was aimed squarely at middle-class white buyers, it's tantalizing to speculate on what might have appeared on the Metropolitan label. NYRL used the Metropolitan name to cover various studio groups on Paramount and related labels, but was the Metropolitan label itself ever produced? So far, the answer seems to be no, but given NYRL's limited production and distribution, this is a possibility I would not rule out.

The Plaza Music Company, in association with the



The Milwaukee Talking Machine Company's Resona trademark (above) bore little resemblance to the Charles Williams Stores brand of the same name.

Regal Record Company and Scranton Button Company, produced many of the best-known dime-store and mail-order labels of the 1920s, but its Harmonia (1924), Giant Tone (1928), Plaza (1928), Veribest (1928), and Film-Tone (1929) brands were not among them. Plaza registered them all, citing dates for first use, but no copies are known to have surfaced. The Cameo Record Corporation registered its Radio label on April 25, 1929, but any plans to launch the label were probably scuttled when Cameo was absorbed by the American Record Corporation four months later.

Of course, these examples are just one small tip of a very large iceberg. Thanks to some alert collectors, I've been able to remove several supposed phantoms from the list: Victor's Victrolite (1914), Gennett's Universal (1928), and Enea Perelli's Cosmopolitan (c. 1904) have all surfaced. But has anyone seen James K. Polk's Perfection label of 1927? Check your junk piles; the possibilities are intriguing.

Notes

¹The law, however, does allow for cancellation of a trademark if it is not used within a specified period.

²Brian Rust, in *The American Record Label Book*, guessed that the Princess label was produced "between 1917 and 1920," but evidence points to a much earlier operation. Princess was registered as a trademark on August 13, 1910, with use claimed on phonographs and records since August 1, 1910.

³The Crescent Talking Machine Company's version of the Crescent label drew on Rex masters during 1916. Its Pathé-derived series, pressed from masters dubbed by Pathé in steel-needle rather than sapphire-ball format, probably first appeared in November 1917, approximately a year after French-American was last heard from.

⁴Although the Resona label exists in several different styles, none resemble the version registered by Milwaukee, and all are traceable to known manufacturers other than MTM.

Allan Sutton is a free-lance author and editor based in Aurora, Colorado. His *Guide to Pseudonyms on American Records* and *Directory of American Disc Record Brands and Manufacturers (1891–1942)* were recently published by Greenwood Press.

LISTENING TO THE ORTHOPHONIC: PART I

By Tom Rhodes

This column in coming issues of Victrola And 78 Journal will discuss different aspects of Orthophonic machines, which are my favorite machines. This first article defines the four basic parts of all vintage machines, defines what Orthophonic means, and finally explains why some collectors prefer Orthophonic machines to all others.

A few comments here may seem basic, but leaving behind beginners would be worse than boring the old guard. What seems basic to longtime collectors could be new information for a new generation of collectors.

A mechanical talking machine is made up of just four different sections, no matter how the parts may be designed or arranged:

- 1) the soundbox
- 2) the tone arm and coupling
- 3) the horn
- 4) the motive power (spring or electric motor)

One could add the housing or cabinet as a fifth component. These components are relatively simple when contrasted with modern sound equipment. That simplicity accounts for vintage uprights and Orthophonics still playing after six to eight decades whereas countless electronic machines are less than memories.

The four basic parts of a vintage machine are:

THE SOUNDBOX

This box that holds the needle is the "active element" which translates the undulations or curves of the spiral record groove into mechanical movement or vibration. The stored energy of the record is converted (less friction and adiabatic loss) into kinetic energy. This kinetic force is not constant but varies according to the stylus movement.

TONE ARM & COUPLING

These support the soundbox. They insure proper positioning for correct tracking and serve as a conduit for the initial vibrations from the soundbox. Invented by Eldridge Johnson, the coupling joins the tone arm to the amplifying chamber.

HORN

This provides another coupling, from the talking machine to the listening room. It expands the soundwave vibrations. The larger the horn, the greater the amplifying power and the more accurate the reproduction. This is not analogous to an electric power amplifier since a horn adds no energy to the system.

MOTIVE POWER

The motor spins the record at a constant speed. Motors of most models have both a governor and regulator. Spring motors allow machines to be independent of outside power sources but they can be characterized by falling torque. Electric motors have constant torque. In multiple spring motors, found in most Victor units, the sequential unwinding of each spring is timed to keep a fairly steady level of torque until the last coil, when the torque drops quickly.

An Orthophonic Victrola is a machine made by the Victor Talking Machine Company between 1925 and 1930 based on the research, inventions, and designs of Henry C. Harrison of Bell Telephone Laboratories and suitably simplified for mass production for the traditional Victor market. Orthophonic joins "orthos," which is Greek for straight, with a Greek word for sound. "Orthophonic" can be translated to "true sound."

The two outstanding features of the Orthophonic machine were a greatly improved soundbox, which had a pleated duralumin alloy diaphragm,

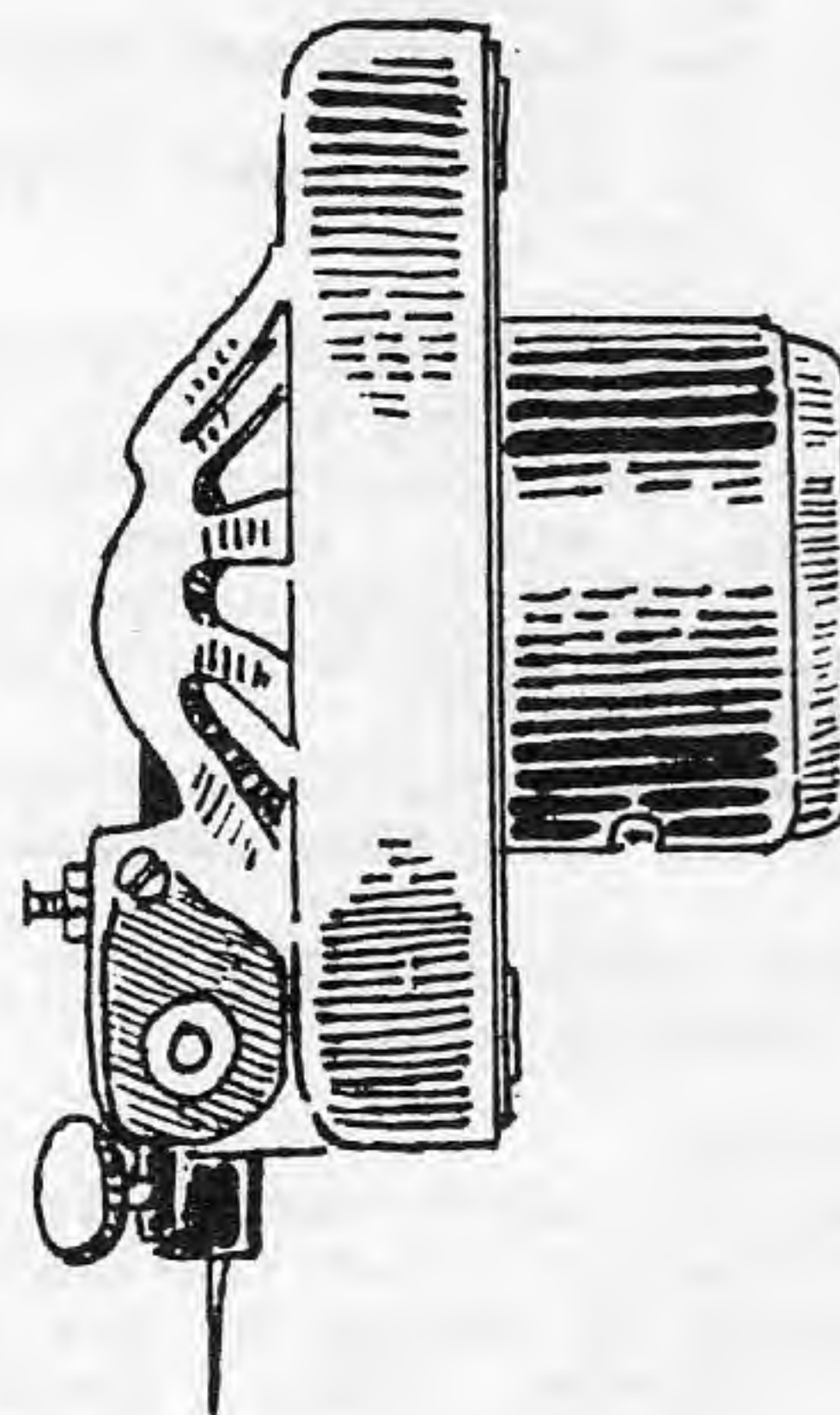
and an exponentially expanding tone chamber which extended frequency range. Like previous Victrolas, Orthophonic models were acousti-mechanical in design and workings, taking acoustic energy engraved on a disc by means of a reproducer and feeding an expanding horn.

Henry C. Harrison was a distinguished scientist. He was an M.I.T. graduate and held over 100 patents on a wide variety of inventions and improvements to inventions of others. His work on what became the Orthophonic Victrola was recognized, rather belatedly, with the Cresson gold medal awarded by the Franklin Institute in 1959.

Two books give excellent accounts of the Orthophonic: the late

Roland Gelatt's The Fabulous Phonograph, which gives a history of the phonograph industry, and Robert Baumbach's Look For The Dog, a useful and well-written guide to the various Orthophonic models. Both books present the Orthophonic Victrola with a proper appreciation for its historical significance and sonic performance. The books are not marred by ideological preconceptions.

Key to the Orthophonic is the soundbox developed in 1924 by Henry C. Harrison in co-operation with Joseph P. Maxfield of Bell Telephone Laboratories. Both engineers worked under the supervision of Chief Engineer John Carty, who had first engaged them to study differences in telephone line transmissions.



HERE IS THE SOUNDBOX THAT MADE THE ORTHOPHONIC SOUND POSSIBLE. IT WAS DEVELOPED IN 1924 BY HENRY C. HARRISON. THESE DRAWINGS WERE DONE BY TOM RHODES.

The practical recording equipment developed for this project was so superior to equipment prevailing then at the major commercial firms that the engineers offered their discoveries on an exclusive basis to Victor Talking Machine Co., the industry leader. Due to executive dithering, Columbia ended up as a co-licensee of the recording process but Victor was the sole producer of machines based on the improvements perfected by Harrison. The soundbox was a very close analog to the best magnetic speakers of the time.

The Orthophonic exhibits a greater degree of efficiency than other mechanical types. The volume and tone which an Orthophonic machine can translate from the groove modulations through its exponential horn into the listening room were never bettered by competing makes. Only the top Brunswick Prismatone comes close. ("Prismatone" was a name adopted by Brunswick in late 1926, possibly as a result of a "name the machine" contest held earlier that year.)

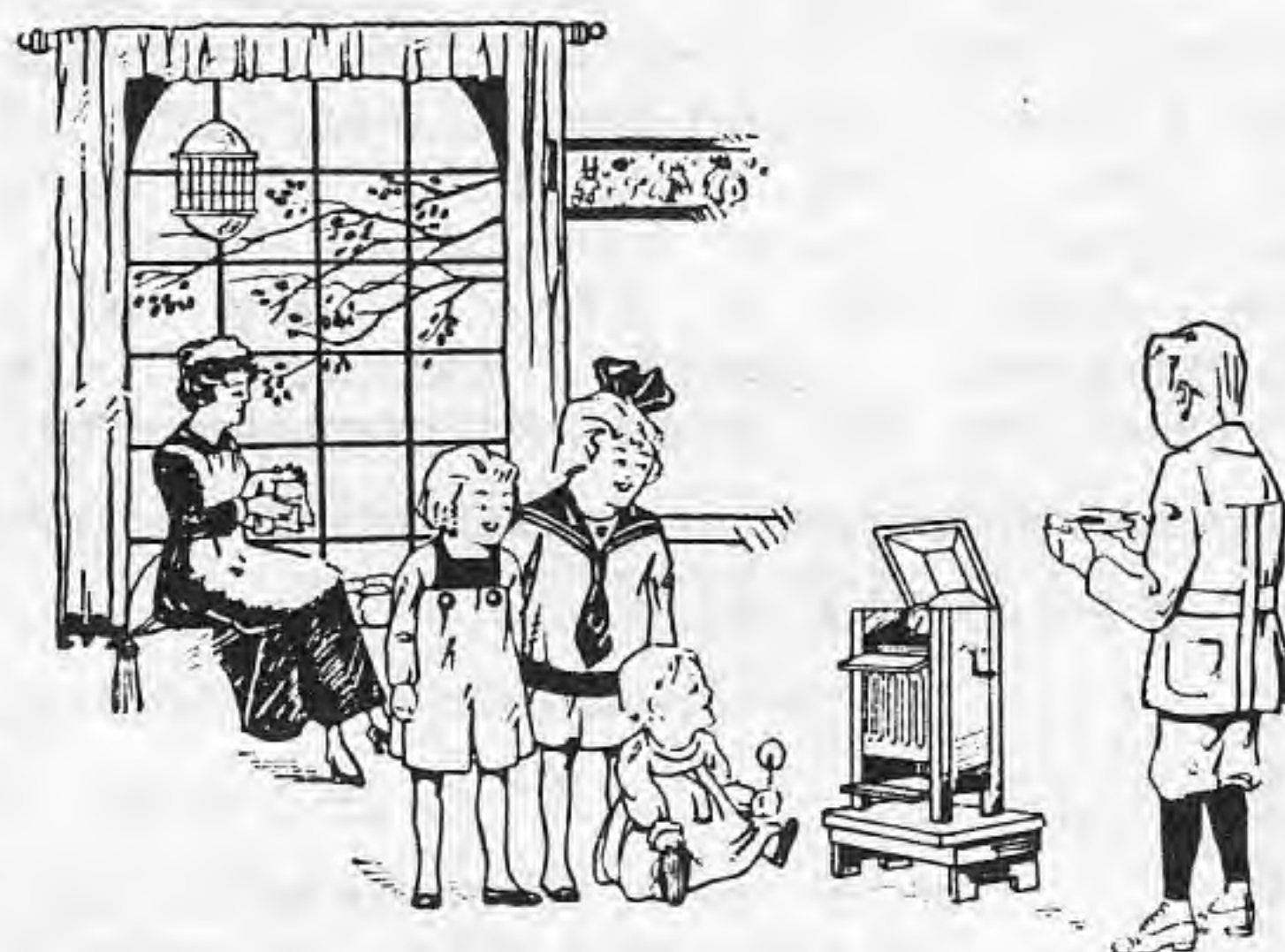
The Orthophonic has the most sound potential if only because of its horn size. Crudely put, big horns deliver big sound. The Credenza and later the 10-50 had horns that simply dwarfed the competition. Never before had standard instruments been endowed with horns of mathematically precise plotting. These horns are far better than the often ill-matched accessory horns of earlier makes.

Orthophonic principles are still scientifically valid. Only the Victor product made full use of the Maxfield & Harrison system. So good was the design of the folded exponential horn that a greatly simplified version was used for high fidelity reproduction--the Klipsch speaker.

While the tone and volume of a properly restored larger Orthophonic

machine can rival or exceed those of early Electrolas, the Orthophonic machines are not prey to the breakdowns of capacitors, wiring harnesses, transformers or tubes. All kinds of problems bedevil some electronic models. Of course, repair or restoration of the Electrola models without the Radiola 28 chassis supplied by RCA is not so problematic. Straight Electrolas, such as the Cromwell and Tuscan, or the Eight Sixty and Ten Fifty One (these have the exponential horns), can and should be restored. Informed collectors rightly appreciate these Electrola models since the machines retain the passive simplicity and reliability of the old style Victrola while approaching the performance of costly electrical units.

The reader should understand that the talking machine prototype designed by Harrison in 1924-25 was meant to be an "analog" of the then modern magnetic speaker reproducing apparatus. Both the magnetic speaker (RCA 100A is one example) and the Orthophonic soundbox have fixed motion drive pins attached to the apex of the diaphragm/cone. Naturally the range of diaphragm action is precise but abrupt in its limitations. The Orthophonic should not be compared to the electrodynamic driver, such as the Magnavox or the RCA 104.



GLASS DIAPHRAGMS VS. MICA

By Bob Waltrip

As far as I know, all acoustic Victor discs were recorded with glass diaphragms. I suppose that glass diaphragms would have been installed in phonograph reproducers for the home except that company executives recognized the "klutz" factor. The glass would have been quickly broken by teenagers rocking out to Paul Whiteman.

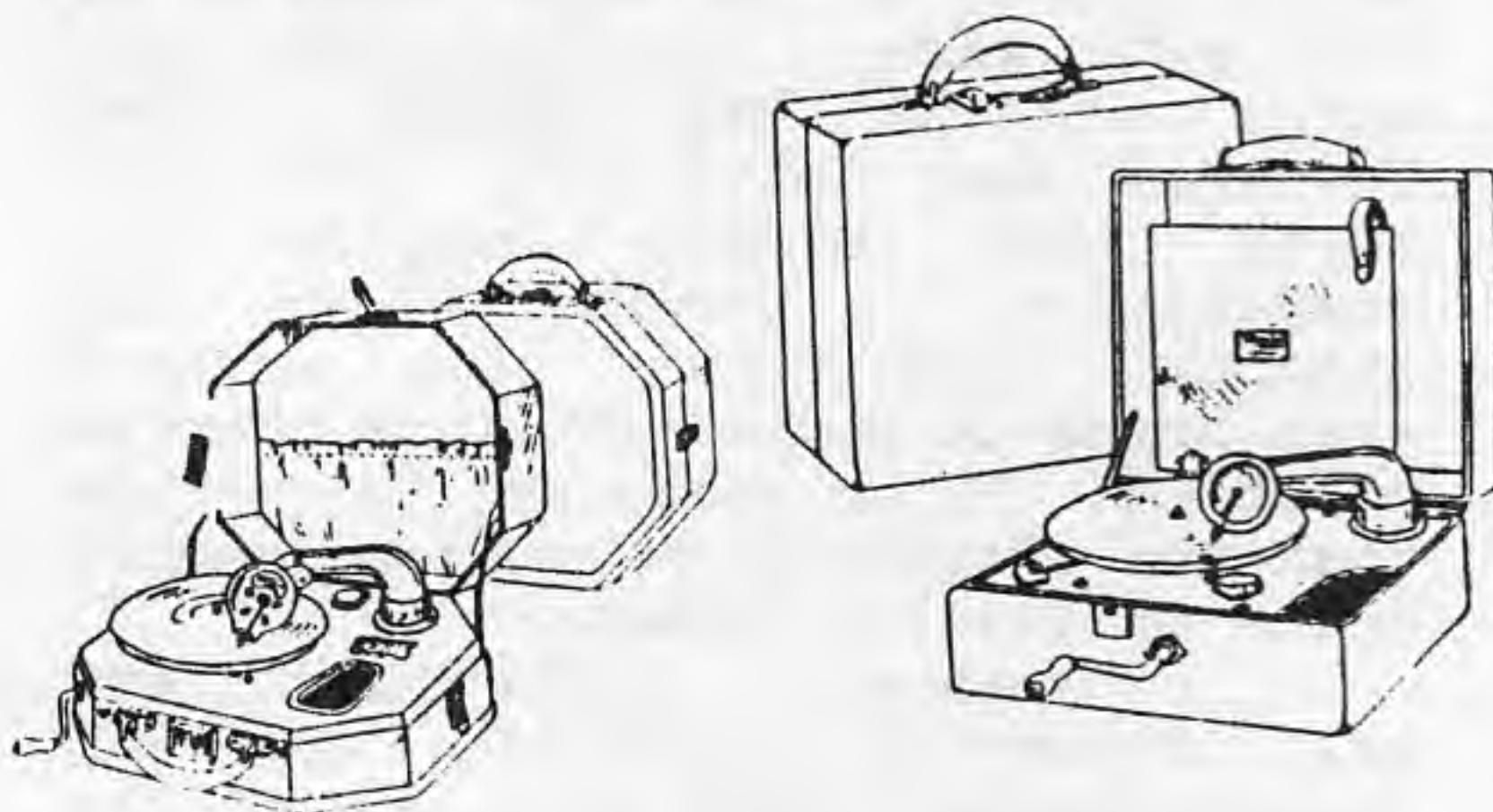
Mica diaphragms were used in reproducers for the home because mica was the only material sturdy enough to withstand rough handling. It is a poor substitute for glass. Mica reproducers, even when new decades ago, would have sounded poorly if compared to glass, and they sound much worse now. This is because the mica has deteriorated.

Mica comes from underneath the ground and was meant to stay in the dark. It is made up of many thin layers. A half-century of sunlight causes mica to harden and lose its structural integrity. The thin layers of mica have shrunk over the decades and have separated to a microscopic degree. This is why the average Exhibition reproducer can sound like a band saw going through a nail. It is also why nobody can get a decent sound when using soft-toned needles.

But isn't new glass more brittle than old mica? No, not when the glass is seven one-thousandths of an inch thick. I have new mica diaphragms which have been kept in the dark in a box. New mica diaphragms sound terrible in comparison to glass diaphragms that

are individually hand-made for me by a glazier in Michigan.

This Michigan glazier cuts a circle of glass that is the size that I require, and he then acid-etches it down to the thinness that I have specified. For instance, 6/1,000-inch glass has a more resonant sound than 7/1,000. The Victrola #2 soundbox was designed so that it would reproduce Caruso's voice with a more ringy and spacy sound. The voice does indeed ring when duplicated by a glass diaphragm mounted by the use of double-suspension floating gaskets. My gasketing technique is of my own design and is, of course, a trade secret. Double-suspension floating gaskets allows the diaphragm to vibrate not only to its edge but at its edge. The diaphragm is free of crimps or stresses, and it can accurately reproduce what is on the record with very little surface noise, no record wear, and no distortion or peaks.



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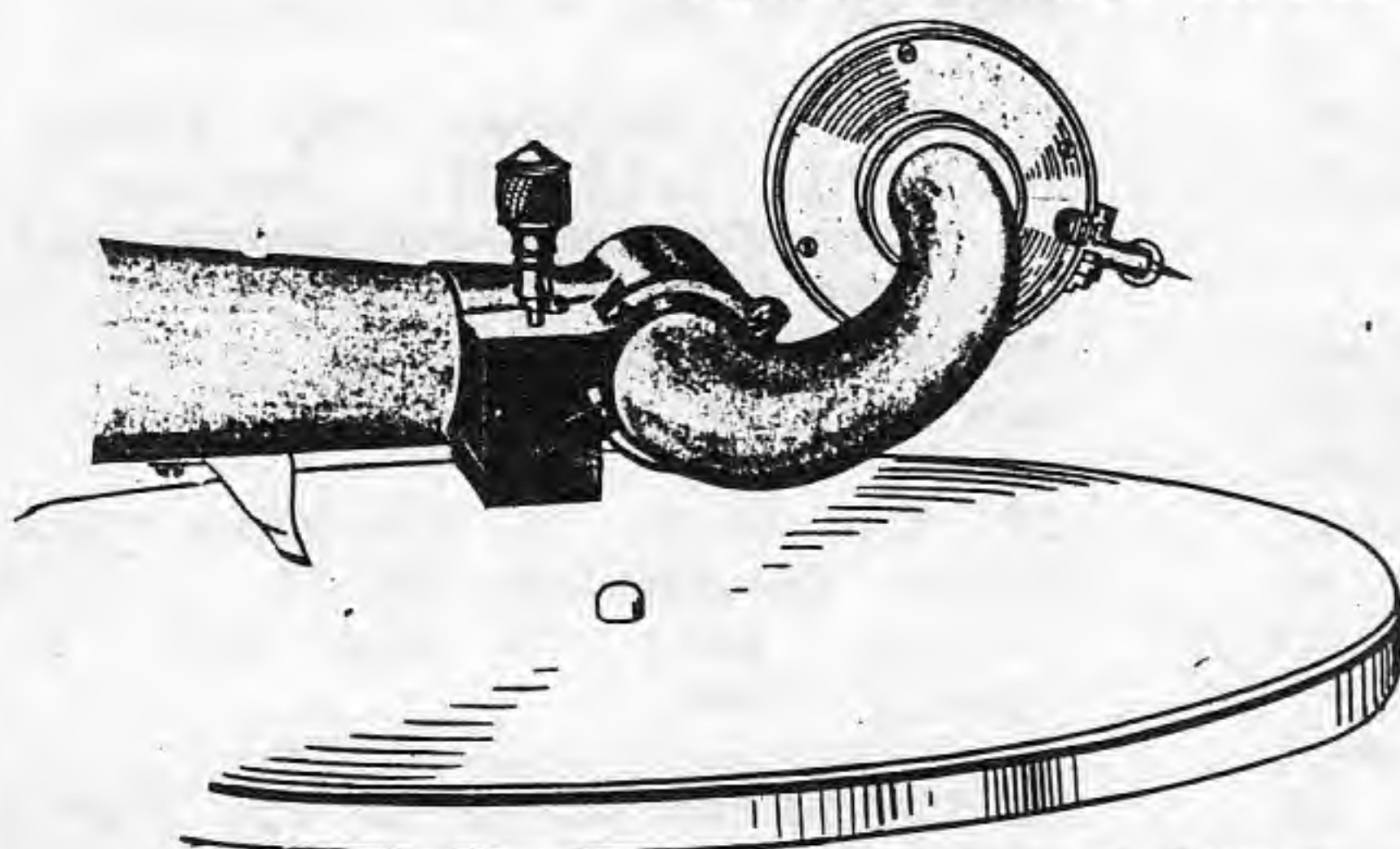
FOR VICTOR JOBBERS AND DEALERS

The HUGHES Safety Sound Box Controller

Manufactured by the HUSTYLUS CORP., Philadelphia, Pa.

Designed Exclusively for VICTROLAS

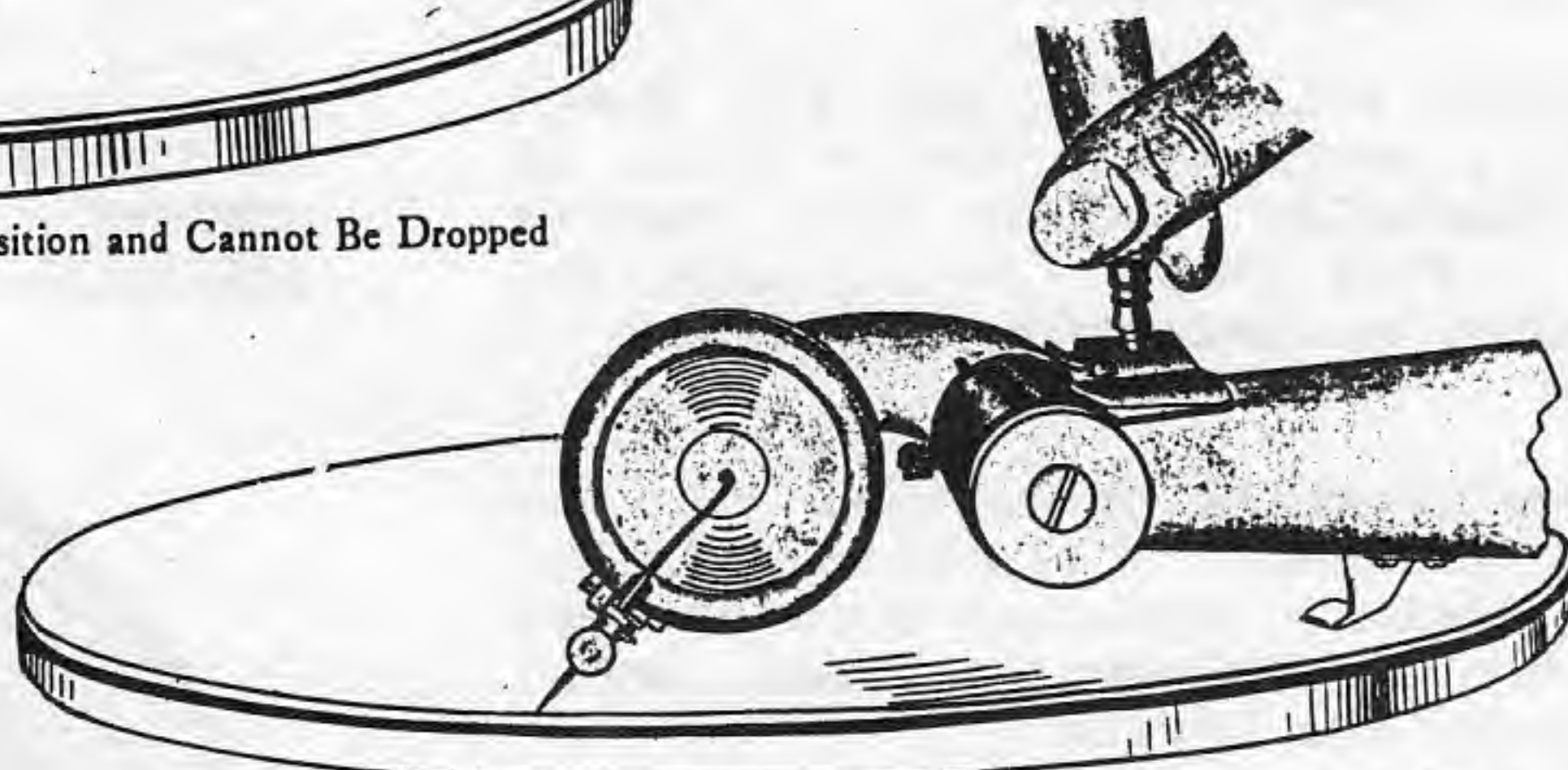
THREE MODELS TO FIT ALL TYPES



It Holds the Sound Box in Any Position and Cannot Be Dropped

Saves Records
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Sound Box **CANNOT**
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The
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BACK**



Anyone can make
**PHONOGRAPH
RECORDS**

MY TEN MOST OFTEN PLAYED RECORDS

By Martin Bryan

1) The Melody Three: "My Song of the Nile" (Victor 22028). A perfect blending of male voices, with lead sung by my favorite tenor, Jack Parker.

2) William F. Wirges' Orchestra: "A Room With A Room" (Brunswick 4145, vocal by Eddy Thomas). A toe-tapper, sure to cure the blues any day!

3) Leo Reisman's Orchestra: "Puttin' on the Ritz" (Victor 22306). Another "feel good" recording, which also contains an astonishing trumpet solo by Bubber Miley--an unusual racial mix for early 1930.

4) Louis Lilienfeld and His Hotel Biltmore Orchestra: "Let a Smile Be Your Umbrella" (Edison Blue Amberol 5496). It's snappy, it's jazzy, and it makes my Amberola sound like a radio!

5) Ben Selvin's Orchestra: "My Man From Caroline" (Columbia 2323-D). The orchestra includes both Dorseys and really swings. Great vocal chorus by Eva Taylor.

6) Giovanni Martinelli & Ezio Pinza: Temple Scene, Parts 1 & 2 from Aida (Victor 8111, with chorus and Metropolitan Opera House Orchestra). Possibly the most amazing recording of 1929. When this is played in a dim room on good equipment at peak volume, the listener can't help getting goosebumps, marveling at Orthophonic recording at its peak.

7) Trio including Alessandro Moreschi and Sistine Choir: "Laudamus Te" (Victor 61116). I don't particularly enjoy listening to this record; what I do enjoy is playing it for non-collector friends to watch their expressions when I explain how the aging Prof. Moreschi became a soprano. Menfolk usually cross their legs and look very uncomfortable!

8) The Knickerbockers: "I Can't Give You Anything But Love/I Must Have That Man" (Columbia 1424-D). Both sides are good and have great vocal choruses by Vaughn De Leath (did she ever do a bad vocal chorus?).

9) Ethel Waters: "My Handy Man" (Columbia 14353-D). Another record to play for non-collector friends. They are invariably surprised by such double-entendre lyrics in a recording now over 65 years old.

10) Mae West: "A Guy What Takes His Time" (Brunswick 6495). Slightly risqué, this is Mae West at her "campy" best.

MARTIN BRYAN LIVES IN ST. JOHNSBURY, VERMONT. HE HAS EDITED THE NEW AMBEROLA GRAPHIC SINCE 1967.



MARTIN BRYAN PRAISES VAUGHN DE LEATH'S VOCALS, AS DO OTHER READERS IN THEIR LISTS. HER REAL NAME WAS LEONORE VONDERLEATH. AS THE EPITHET "THE RADIO GIRL" SUGGESTS, SHE WAS A RADIO PIONEER. SHE DIED IN 1943.

MY TEN ALL-TIME FAVORITE RECORDS

PAGE 35

By L.E. Andersen

1) The Quinteto Jorda: "En Souridine" (by Tellam). Mex. Edison 2M. 18779, Mexico City, June 1904. Soothing and hauntingly sweet with fine solo work by 1st Violin Jose Rocabruna on his Andrea Amati.

2) Jules Levy, Snr: "Our Own Make Polka" (by Levy). Victor 10" 2496, 7 May 1903 (52 days before his death). Superbly recorded, Levy's second version of his composition for his employer, Lyon & Healy, puts you "in the room" with the 19th century's greatest cornet virtuoso, echoing his earlier heyday.

3) Ninth Infantry Band, Adolf Berdien cond.: "Der Fremersberg" (by Koennemann). Polydor 12" B61119/20, Berlin 1927. Dramatic and very moving symphonic picture--reminiscent of "Night on Bald Mountain" or "Hunt in the Black Forest." Storm Scene is hair-raising every time! Technically and musically great.

4) Gustave Berl-Resky: "Los Ojos Negros" (by Alvarez). Edison 2M. B-27, spring 1906. Fast-moving, passionate Spanish serenade beautifully interpreted by the full, rich baritone of this Metropolitan Opera artist.

5) Al Jolson: "That Little German Band" (by Fischer). Columbia 10" A1356, 4 June 1913. Uncanny stage presence, radiant energy and exuberance, Jolie is on stage right there in the room with you and at his youthful best.

6) John McCormack: "I Hear You Call-

ing Me" (by Marshall). Okeh 12" 50001, from Odeon mx Lxx2854, London, 3 Oct. 1908. Youth and vocal maturity both shine in this deeply moving ballad which invariably moves me to tears.

7) Gilmore's Band: "Love Is King, March" (by Innes). Columbia 2M. 1647, 1899. My number one march choice. From opening fanfare through Grand March portion to dramatic climax, this showcases the full band and Innes' mastery at composition.

8) Edward M. Favor: "My Wife's Gone To The Country" (by Snyder). Edison 2M. 10218, rel. Oct. 1909. Here the veteran vaudevillian shows unusual ebullience and stage presence in an unabashedly sexist song. Irving Berlin collaborated.

9) Sophie Tucker: "My Husband's In The City" (by Henry). Edison 2M. 10366, rel. June 1910. Dynamic, sexy, young Sophie offers a wickedly humorous riposte to Favor's unrepentant chauvinism ("... I have a good time too!") with cheers from the male audience. Risque, wonderful, hilarious.

10) Transformation and Grail Scene from *Parsifal* (by Wagner). Sides 2 & 3 from Columbia 1927 Bayreuth Set 79 by Bayreuth Festival Orch., Dr. Karl Muck cond. Dignified, majestic, profoundly moving. A high point is the awesome tolling of the huge Festspielhaus Bells, since destroyed. When we play this set wholly or in part, no-one speaks, and the telephone stays off the hook or else!

Okeh and Truetone Needles

A Product of the
GENERAL PHONOGRAPH CORPORATION
OTTO HEINEMAN, Pres.

25 West Forty-fifth Street

NEW YORK, N. Y.

MY TEN MOST HATED 78s

By Steven Phipps

1) Nat M. Wills: "No News, or What Killed the Dog" (Victor 17222). Am I missing something, or is this one of the most boring and least funny comedy records ever recorded? The reverse, "The Three Trees" by Tom McNaughton, seems equally pointless.

2) Uncle Eph: "Old Time Reels" (Silverstone 1286). Eph starts out alright, but his reels quickly disintegrate into a cacophony.

3) Ginger Prince: "Right Under My Nose" (Kaybee 2424). Ginger is obviously promoted more because of her very young age than because of any musical talents. The record company should have waited until she was a little older and could sing.

4) Master Radio Canaries: "Come Back to Sorrento" (Hartz Mountain Products UB-50-446/447). This consists of rather bland-sounding instrumental music with the addition of what sounds like a large number of birds, each doing its own thing! None of the bird sounds have anything to do with the music.

5) Jockers Brothers: "Me-Ow" (Columbia A2639). A grating violin tune--the instrument is made to sound like someone is singing the word "meow."

6) Johnnie Moore: "Jimmy Rodgers Blue Yodel" (Broadway 8083). Why not simply listen to Jimmie Rodgers?

7) Jimmie Skinner: "Jimmie's Yodel Blues (A Tribute to Jimmie Rodgers)" (Radio Artist Records 255). Ditto.

8) Bing Crosby: "Walking the Floor Over You" (Decca 18371). Bing should have left the country music to Ernest Tubb.

9) "T" Texas Tyler: "Deck of Cards" (4 Star 1228). A popular monologue about a soldier reprimanded for playing cards in church. After hearing his explanation of the supposedly deep religious meaning evoked by looking through an ordinary deck of playing cards, I conclude that he would have gotten more out of paying attention to the sermon.

10) Van and Schenck: "All She'd Say Was Umh Hum" (Columbia A3319). Typical of their strange vocal style: one of the two sounds deliberately falsetto, and together they sound just downright weird.

STEVEN PHIPPS LIVES IN DE SOTO, MISSOURI.



Stromberg-Carlson's
FAMOUS TONE-
for Both Radio and Records

MY TEN FAVORITE 78s

PAGE 37

By Bob Foster

1) Rethberg, Gigli, Pinza: Trios from *Lombardi* and *Attila* (Victrola 8194). Rethberg was Toscanini's favorite soprano, and for good reason! The *Lombardi* trio with Alda, Caruso, and Journet is also outstanding. I'm a sucker for the sheer romanticism of early Verdi operas. Does anyone know of anything else from *Attila* on 78?

2) Martinelli, de Luca, Mardones: "Troncar suoi di" from *William Tell* (Victor 95213). The trio on this disc is a fine companion to the duo from Rossini's *William Tell* done by Martinelli and Journet. Julian Morton Moses says that Mardones "never made a really poor recording," and I only wish that the singer had made additional concerted recordings for Victor--that is, other recordings in which no one singer dominates, and each singer compliments the other.

3) Enrico Caruso: "Campana San Giusto" (Victrola 88612). Caruso's love for his native land and the canzone blend perfectly in this and other recordings. Play this for anyone skeptical about the "quality" of acoustic discs.

4) Giuseppe Campanari: Arias from *Nozze de Fagaro* [sic] (Columbia A740). This recording was featured at intermission during a recent Metropolitan broadcast of Mozart's opera. When I heard the bravura ending of "Non piu Andrai," I wanted to cheer. What I did not know is that Campanari had the pitch lowered so he could show off! My friend David Schmutz of Glendale, California suggests comparing these with the much more Mozartian ones by Pinza.

5) Rosa Ponselle: "Selva opaca" from *William Tell* (Columbia 98058). Compare this with the truncated version on the 10" Victor by Galli-Curci and the 12" HMV by Dal Monte, among others. Some feel Ponselle was at her best on these quiet late Col-

umbias, despite her chagrin when her agent signed her up for Columbia and not Victor for her earliest 78s.

6) Aureliano Pertile: "Non t'amo più" by Tosti (HMV DA1008). Those who viewed the Pavarotti special in which his father sang in a male chorus may recall the program's tribute to historic tenors, including Pertile. Pavarotti himself sang this haunting song, which I feel is a better setting of the text than the Denza one Caruso recorded.

7) Edith Mason: "Last Rose of Summer"/"Goodbye" (Brunswick 30108). Mason makes gold out of straw! There is not a false touch in her interpretation of these two standards. In my estimation, she is in the same league with Rethberg, a very select league.

8) Titta Ruffo: Prologo from *Pagliacci* (Victrola 92040). This "baritonal Tamagno" delivers as clean a final "A" as any I've heard. His later two-part Prologue is more complete but to my ears lacks the élan vital of the earlier take.

9) Luisa Tetrazzini: "O luce" (Victor 88506). Marty Robinson, in "The First Fifty Years," began a tribute to Tetrazzini with this, which is everything bel canto should be. I purchased a copy in 1988 that turned out to be cracked, but last year my bidding paid off with a great copy.

10) Celestina Boninsegna: "Bel Raggio" from *Semiramide* (Columbia S5041). Another splendid example of bel canto singing. I recall over 25 years ago that Leroy Custer, a Pasadena collector, introduced me to the incredible "Giorni di horrore" from this opera, featuring Sutherland and Horne trilling for many measures in perfect thirds. I wonder who Boninsegna's partner would have been?

BOB FOSTER LIVES IN NEVIS, MINNESOTA.

MY TEN MOST PLAYED CYLINDERS

By Leon Katzinger

1) Edward Meeker: "Harrigan" (Edison 9616; 1907). An excellent rendition of a classic song.

2) Collins and Harlan: "Baby Rose" (U.S. Everlasting 1246; 1911). One of the best early recording teams.

3) Vaughn De Leath: "Blue Skies" (Blue Amberol 5312; 1927). A song that helped define pre-depression days.

4) Jones and Hare: "Henry's Made a Lady Out of Lizzie" (Blue Amberol 5476; 1928). This would also be on my "ten most played 78s" list.

5) Helen Clark: "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Soldier" (Blue Amberol 2580; 1915). I find it interesting that anti-war songs were sung before the U.S.A. entered World War I.

6) Arthur Fields: "Ja Da" (Blue Amberol 3649; 1919). I guess people could be happy and sing "Ja Da" after the war was over.

7) Bob Roberts: "Nothing From Nothing Leaves You" (Edison 9155; 1905). It seems his relationship with his girlfriend is not great.

8) Premier Quartet: "Oh By Jingo, Oh By Gee" (Blue Amberol 4041; 1919). The translation part in the middle is a howl.

9) Golden Gate Orchestra: "There's A Trick in Pickin' Your Chick Chick Chicken" (Blue Amberol 5410; 1927). Jazz on an Edison!

10) Ada Jones and Billy Murray: "When We Are M*A*R*R*I*E*D" (Edison 9875; 1908). A cute duet and the first cylinder I ever owned.

LEON KATZINGER LIVES IN BAY CITY, MICHIGAN.



The true Negro dialect of the time of Uncle Remus preserved on a permanent plastic record.

It is one you will want to give to your best friend and keep for your children. If you want to make a friend, give him one.

JIM WALSH KNEW ROANOAKE, VIRGINIA VERY WELL SINCE HE WROTE FOR A ROANOAKE PAPER AND LIVED THERE FOR A TIME. IT IS THE SITE OF AN ADA JONES/SHANNON FOUR CONCERT IN APRIL 1918, RECALLED BY WALSH IN HOBBIES (JUNE 1954). DID HE WRITE ABOUT THIS 1946 DISC? THE LABEL'S TIP, "PLAY SLOWLY," IS UNHELPFUL. HOW SLOW IS "SLOWLY"?

NEW BOOK:

REVIEWED BY TIM GRACYK

George Frow's EDISON CYLINDER PHONOGRAPH COMPANION

ISBN 0-9606466-1-4

George Frow's Edison Cylinder Phonograph Companion came with my first batch of mail in 1995, an auspicious beginning to the new year. Many books scheduled for 1995 release will interest phonograph and 78 collectors. They will be reviewed in V78J with no time wasted. I hope all are as impressive as Frow's book.

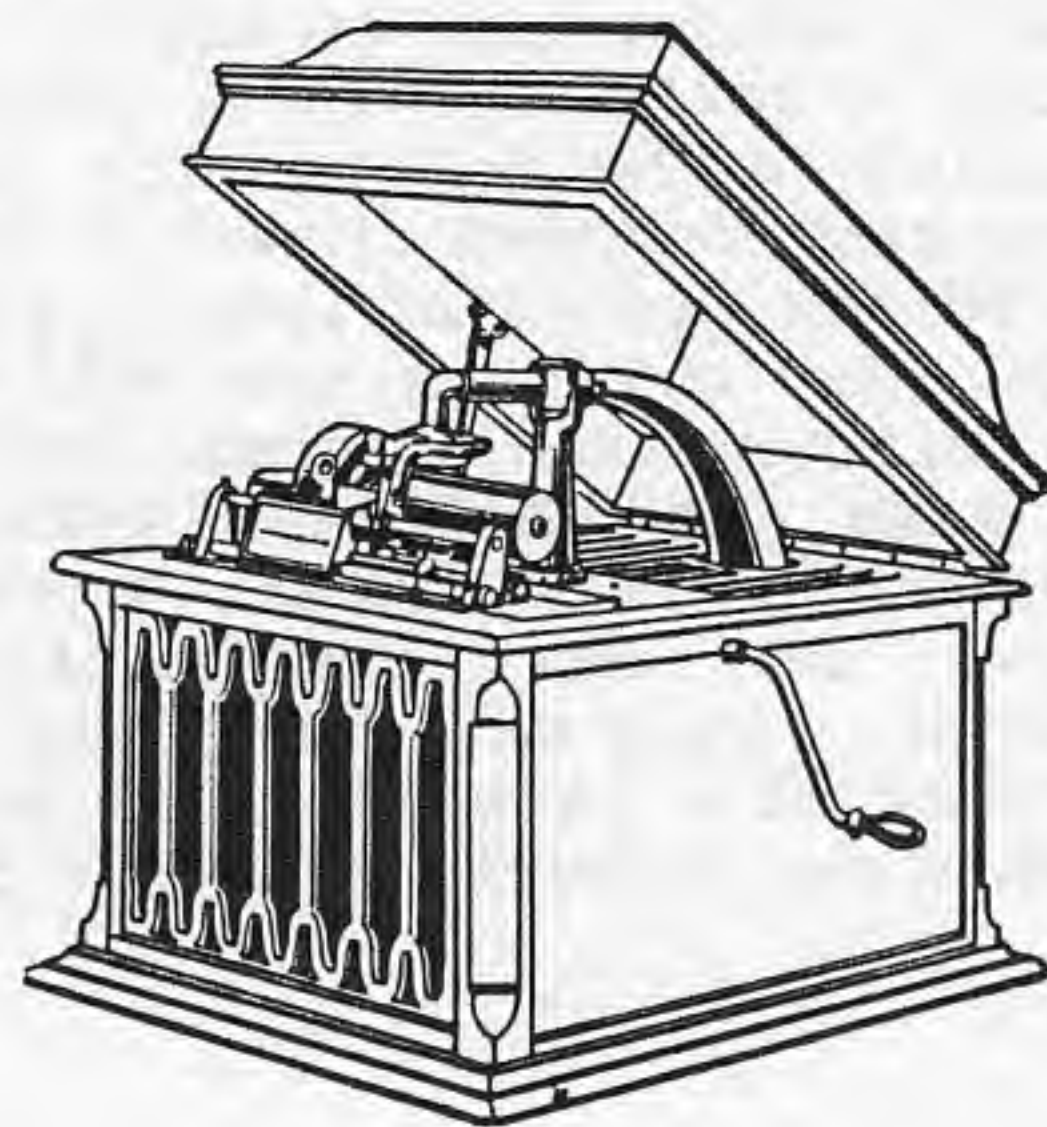
Anyone serious about cylinder machines needs this book. It does not matter if you already own Frow and Sefl's The Edison Cylinder Phonograph 1877 - 1929. At 383 pages, the revised book is almost twice the size, giving details and illustrations that will assure novice and expert alike that Frow is the authority on these machines.

Even the bright baby-blue dust jacket is an improvement over the Frow and Sefl cover. A stunning Edison Opera model graces the new cover. It belongs to Ray Phillips, whose own book on the Edison Kinetoscope will be issued this year by the publisher Flick. We cannot expect Frow to acknowledge who owns which machine in this book illustrating many models (his "Acknowledgements" section is very gracious), but perhaps he could make an exception for the beauty on the cover.

His name never appears, but Robert Baumbach, author of Look For The Dog, deserves thanks from the collecting community for publishing this. His company Stationary X-Press put this out. Actually, someone sneaked the title of Baumbach's book, Look For The Dog, onto page 289 in an amusing way--take a look.

Most publishers cut corners by limiting illustrations. Greenwood Press issues books of great interest to collectors, but its books offer few photos or drawings. Books about machine models must offer many visuals. The good news is that this has hundreds of photos and drawings on heavy, quality paper. The not-so-good news is that many photos are far too dark and small for those interested in details on machines.

Photos range from excellent quality to very poor: on page 84 we see wonderful details of the Home motor, but turn a page to 86 and strain your eyes to make out the feed nut that Frow wants us to examine. On page 172 we see the fine grain in the inside lid of a model C-VI, which is lovely! But turn to page 14 for the Bergmann Phonograph or page 51 for the Conqueror--all is shrouded in darkness. A caption on page 186 claims the photograph is of a corner of the Edison factory, but I can make nothing of this.



A page-by-page comparison will leave a careful reader struck by how much has been added. The beginning chapter alone will impress collectors who know the 1978 edition. It is now titled "Tinfoil Phonographs"--the title itself is an improvement over the awkward one in the earlier edition ("Pre-Domestic Uses and Development of the Edison Phonograph"). Among other things, Frow now discusses "the world's oldest recoverable recording claimed so far." Frow does not identify the owner, but many will know this refers to Aaron Cramer's discovery.

A recording turned out to be cut directly into the lead sleeve of a phonograph made around 1879 by Frank Lambert (not to be confused with Thomas Lambert). Simple clock times are announced: one o'clock, two o'clock, and so on. Lambert was clearly working towards a talking clock. Ten o'clock is skipped! (Cramer speculates in APM's Issue No. 87 that this French immigrant inadvertently skipped ten o'clock since English was still new to him.) The recording is described on page 20, which has a terribly grainy photo of a tinfoil machine. Perhaps a future printing could replace it with a photo of the rare Lambert.

Chapter Two is new. Titled "Talking Doll," it tops the chapter called "The Edison Talking-Doll Phonograph" in the new Welch and Burt From Tinfoil To Stereo since Frow gives more details (care to know 12 nursery rhymes recited by dolls?), and fine illustrations appear in the chapter itself, one of a phonograph installed in the doll's back, another of the same removed from the doll. A rare Edison Doll box label is duplicated. New chapters are well-done.

Discussions of some models are the same as before, with some discussions quite brief, presumably because no new information has surfaced. This may disappoint some. The owner of a rare Amberola Model B-VI asked me eagerly whether the new

book has more on the B-VI than the 1978 book. No, the information is the same--oddly, the wording is different. The B-VI must be rare since Frow had to use a catalog photograph.

For readers who hope the new book matches dates of manufacture with numbers punched on the machines, Frow admits in his Foreword that this remains "surely the biggest void in Edison phonograph knowledge" (9).

The book is very well written. However, in at least one instance passages are contradictory. I was at first charmed by Frow's conclusion on page 225 that previous generations were "more restrained" than today's. Marvelling that delicate machines still survive even though customers did the winding, Frow concludes that the general public once treated machines with respect and gentleness. For contrast, he reminds us of "the punching and rough treatment meted out to coin operated machines" now. We like to think of previous generations as more genteel, civilized, restrained. How rough can a society be when "Silver Threads Among the Gold" is a best-seller?

But Frow had said on page 203 that "the first Automatic Phonograph Exhibition Company's machines were unreliable and people were treating them roughly." He speaks of these customers as "heavy-handed and large-booted." Let's remember we are not far from the days when Byron Harlan had a hit with "They Gotta Quit Kickin' My Dawg Aroun'." People evidently kicked then as they kick now. That's the fate of coin-operated machines, collectors' machines excepted.

Although I value notes given at the end of chapters so I know what sources could supply more information, in two cases Frow's notes are not given satisfactorily. Consider Chapter One's fourth note:

Depicted in Petersen's "Creation of the Original Phonograph"
A.P.C.S. Journal Summer 1974.

Here is the fifth note:

Petersen American Phonograph Journal March 1978.

Given Frow's incomplete citations, researchers won't find the originals easily. I am thinking of future scholars, not just today's.

Frow should say somewhere that "A.P.C.S." stands for American Phonograph Collecting Society, which issued its first newsletter circa 1972. Most members lived in the San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose area, including Al Seftl, Art Wilmoth, and David Fletcher. V78J comes out of San Jose, so I am sensitive to references to the Society though it was defunct when I began collecting.

By 1974 the newsletter evolved into the Journal of the American Phonograph Collecting Society. On page 114 Frow cites an A.P.S. Journal (sic) and even cites volume and number. He should be consistent.

Who is "Petersen"? No first name? No volume and number? Phillip Petersen was appointed Society Archivist. Information he presented in the Winter 1974 issue and others had never been published before. The last issue was Fall 1976. In March 1978 he began his American Phonograph Journal but announced in its fourth issue that "enthusiasm did not reach a sufficient number of collectors to subsidize the journal," so the journal folded. Petersen's articles came from his research in the Thomas Alva Edison Historical Site's vaults. According to the San Francisco Chronicle on October 14, 1988, Petersen later surrendered "in a San Francisco federal court" for "concealing and selling documents . . . that had been stolen from the historic museum in West Orange, N.J."

In short, Frow credits Petersen but the credit is neither effusive nor complete as on page 7 of the 1978 edition, where "Dr. Phillip Petersen" is specially thanked: "the compilers acknowledge his kindness in allowing

use of this material."

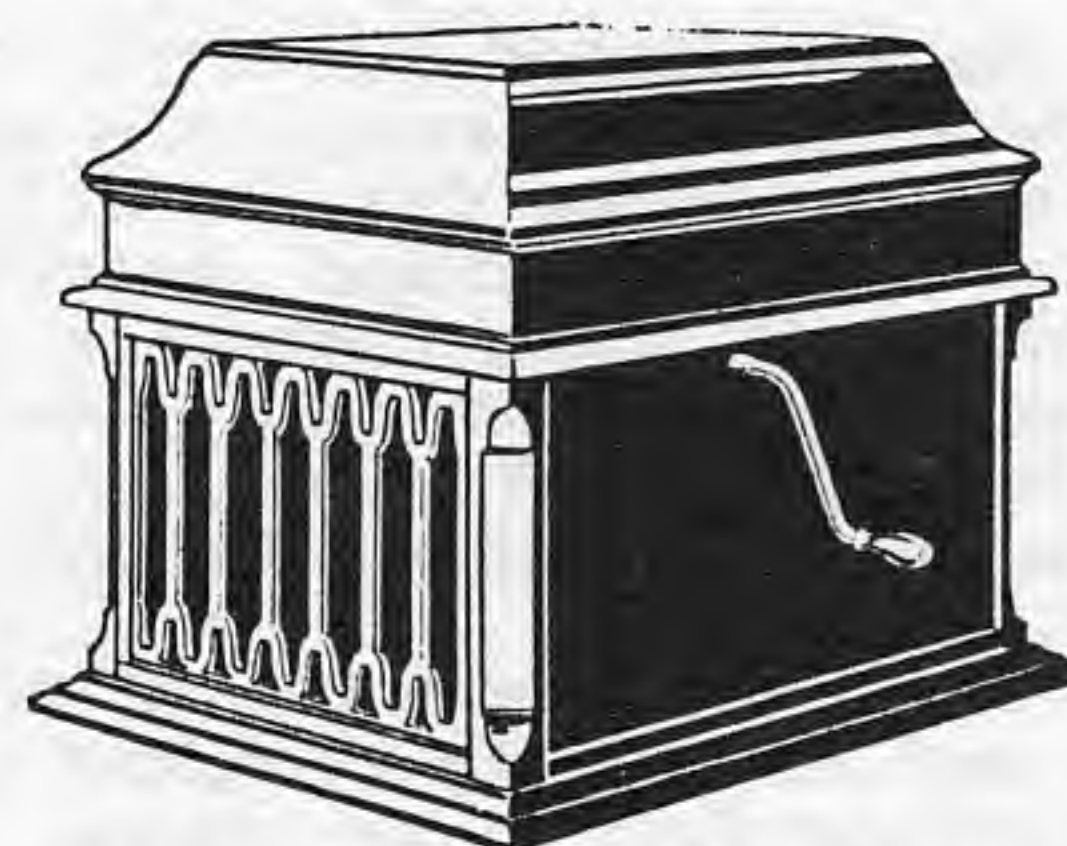
This should help future scholars who wonder why Petersen in an early edition gets very warm thanks and later gets minimal credit (last name only--otherwise the new book gives full names at least once). Copies of American Phonograph Journal and the preceding journal and newsletter are rare indeed.

Another Edison

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Phonograph with
concealed horn*

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Only 16x22 inches

Plays the four-minute

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"The Edison Phonograph Man"

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CD REVIEW:

REVIEWED BY FLOYD LEVIN

LOUIS WITH FLETCHER HENDERSON

1924 - 1925

THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS
INCLUDING ALL ALTERNATE TAKES

VOLUMES 1, 2, 3 -- Fletcher Henderson and his Orchestra: Elmer Chambers, Howard Scott, Louis Armstrong, tps; Charlie Green, tb; Don Redman, (possibly Cecil Scott), Coleman Hawkins, Buster Bailey (added after 2nd tune), reeds; Fletcher Henderson, p; Charlie Dixon, bj; Ralph Escudero, tuba; Kaiser Marshall, dr.

Recorded in New York City from Oct. 7, 1924 through Oct. 21, 1925

As a seasoned collector, I find the thought of reviewing this remarkable set of three CDs intimidating. Imagine--the complete recordings, including all known alternate takes, of the legendary Fletcher Henderson sessions in 1924-5 when young Louis Armstrong burst upon the New York scene.

They were recorded at 20 sessions and originally released on 78s by 18 independent firms--Regal, Pathé Actualite, Perfect, Domino, Paramount, Oriole, others. The mere mention of those rare labels will increase the pulse rate of an avid jazz record collector--this reviewer included!

Early collectors searching for these elusive items were frustrated by the array of pseudonyms that masked the identity of the musicians. In those days, there were no discographies to identify the Club Wigwam Orchestra, California Melodie Serenaders, Criterion Idle Hour Orchestra, or Lanin's Arcadians. The twenty page booklet included in the three CD package, which includes all known photographs of Armstrong with the Henderson band, brings it all into a bright focus.

John R.T. Davies' excellent transfers of sixty-five tracks were culled from five private collections. The result is an intriguing document of the acoustic era brought clearly into the digital decade. Louis is present on all 62 cuts. We hear him as a soloist and an audible section leader on ensembles.

Until spurred by the presence of Louis Armstrong, the Henderson band followed the strident rigidity of early white dance orchestras. The basic elements were in place. Coleman Hawkins, later destined to become a stalwart figure on the tenor sax, had not yet attained his lofty stature; the great clarinetist Buster Bailey, trumpeter Joe Smith, trombonist Charlie Green, drummer Kaiser Marshall, and arranger Don Redman added to the talent of this group.

Sensing the public's clamor for hotter sounds, Henderson lured Armstrong from the King Oliver Creole Jazz Band in Chicago to meet the demand. This move had a profound impact on the Henderson orchestra. It also jump-started Armstrong's career in New York, the center of the entertainment industry.

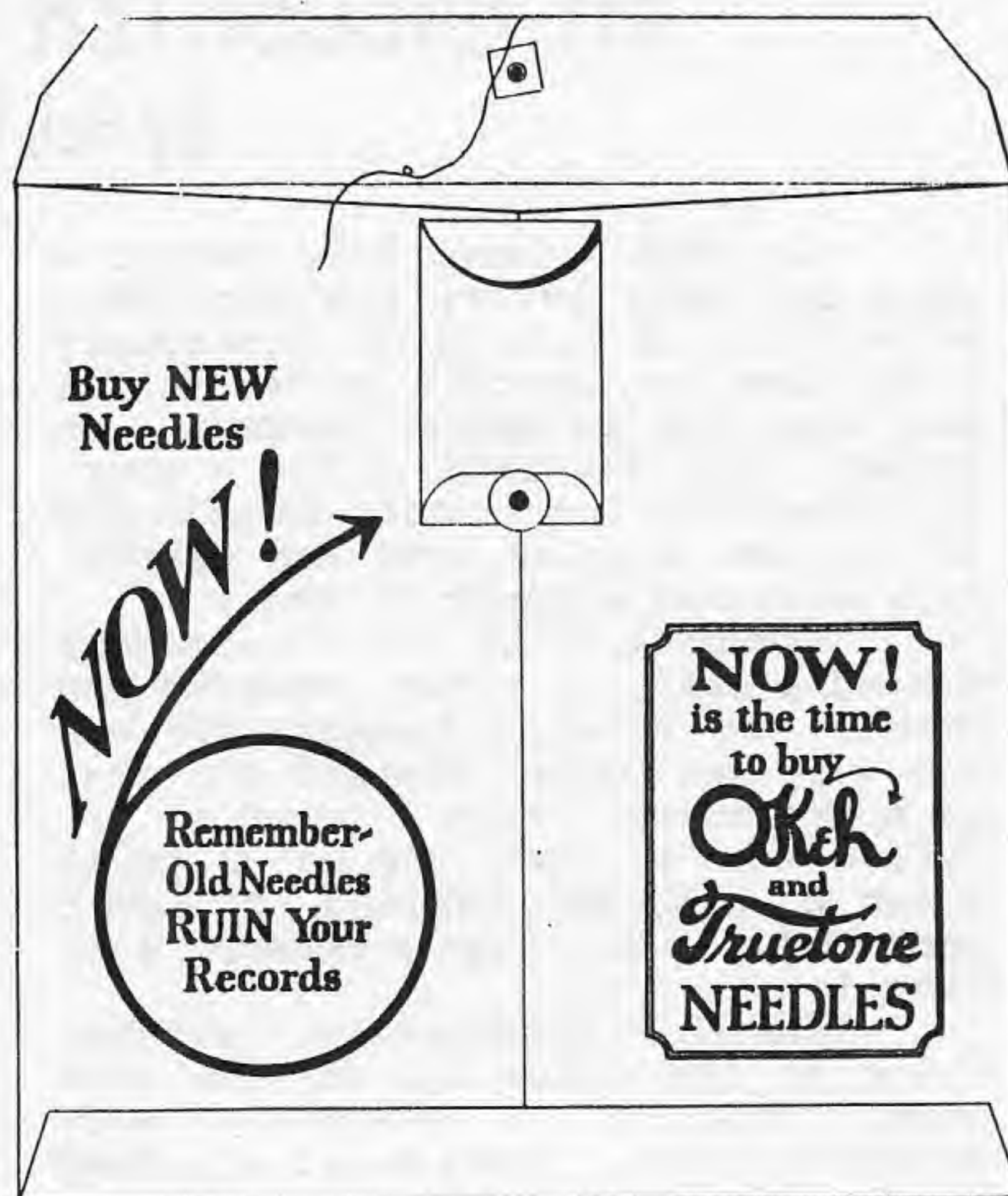
Louis arrived a few days before the first record date on October 7, 1924. The 23 year-old cornetist, shy and unassuming, merged comfortably with the established New York musicians. It was apparent from the start that his melodic and harmonic skills were fully established.

Louis' wonderful work on "How Come You Do Me Like You Do?" exposes the datedness of the rest of the players. His inspirational choruses on "Shanghai Shuffle" and "Naughty

Man" revamped the band's previous commercial format and altered Don Redman's arranging style. He experimented with concepts freshly innovative in 1924--clarinet trios, rich ensemble phrasing, and interplay between reeds and brass. He set the scene for the swing era that would follow a dozen years later.

With Armstrong's impetus, tunes like "What-Cha-Call -'Em Blues," "Copenhagen," and "Sugar Foot Stomp" attained a level of quality that soon established the Henderson band as a reckoning force on the jazz scene.

"Memphis Bound" and "When You Do What You Do," among the rarest of the Henderson issues, are examples of arranger Redman and soloist Armstrong's ability to transform trite material into artistic triumphs. On "Words," recorded during his third session with the band, Armstrong leaps in with some of the most inspired solo work of his career. Henderson, who eschewed vocals, failed to make use of the cornetist's singing ability. Armstrong is heard on only a few bars of "Everybody Loves My Baby."



MY ENCOUNTER WITH RUDY VALLEE

By Ron Pendergraft

In 1985 I sent Rudy Vallee a card one week before his birthday, which falls on July 28th. Previously I had sent two letters to Mr. Vallee and knew his telephone number. On Sunday, July 28, 1985, I had a spur-of-the-moment inspiration to call him at his Los Angeles home and personally wish him a happy birthday.

Around 4:00 in the afternoon I placed a call. A woman answered the phone. At first I thought she was his wife but later decided she must be a secretary. When I asked if Mr. Vallee was at home and if I could speak to him, she replied, "I don't know if he is in--just a moment, I'll ring."

Almost immediately another voice at the other end of the line said, "Hello?" I recognized Rudy Vallee's voice. I was a bit startled at the ease with which I was able to contact a celebrity so quickly by telephone. I found myself nervous about what to say since I had not really believed I would get through.

After a quick composure, I introduced myself and Mr. Vallee responded by saying he knew who I was. He said, "Yes, I received your birthday card. Thank you very much."

At that point of the conversation, I was at a loss for words, so I said what I thought would please him: "I have just purchased an LP recording of yours called *Heigh-Ho Everybody, This Is Rudy Vallee*."

There was a moment of silence. Then a half-chuckle came from Mr. Vallee. Finally he said in no uncertain terms, "Anything I recorded before 1950 you can shit on!"

I was startled at what I heard. Thinking that I must have misunderstood his statement, I said, "What?" Again he told me what I could do with his old recordings. Almost immediately afterwards he said, "I don't want to talk anymore!" He hung up on me.

This is my one encounter with Rudy Vallee. He died the next year on July 3, 1986.



DOMINO RECORDS

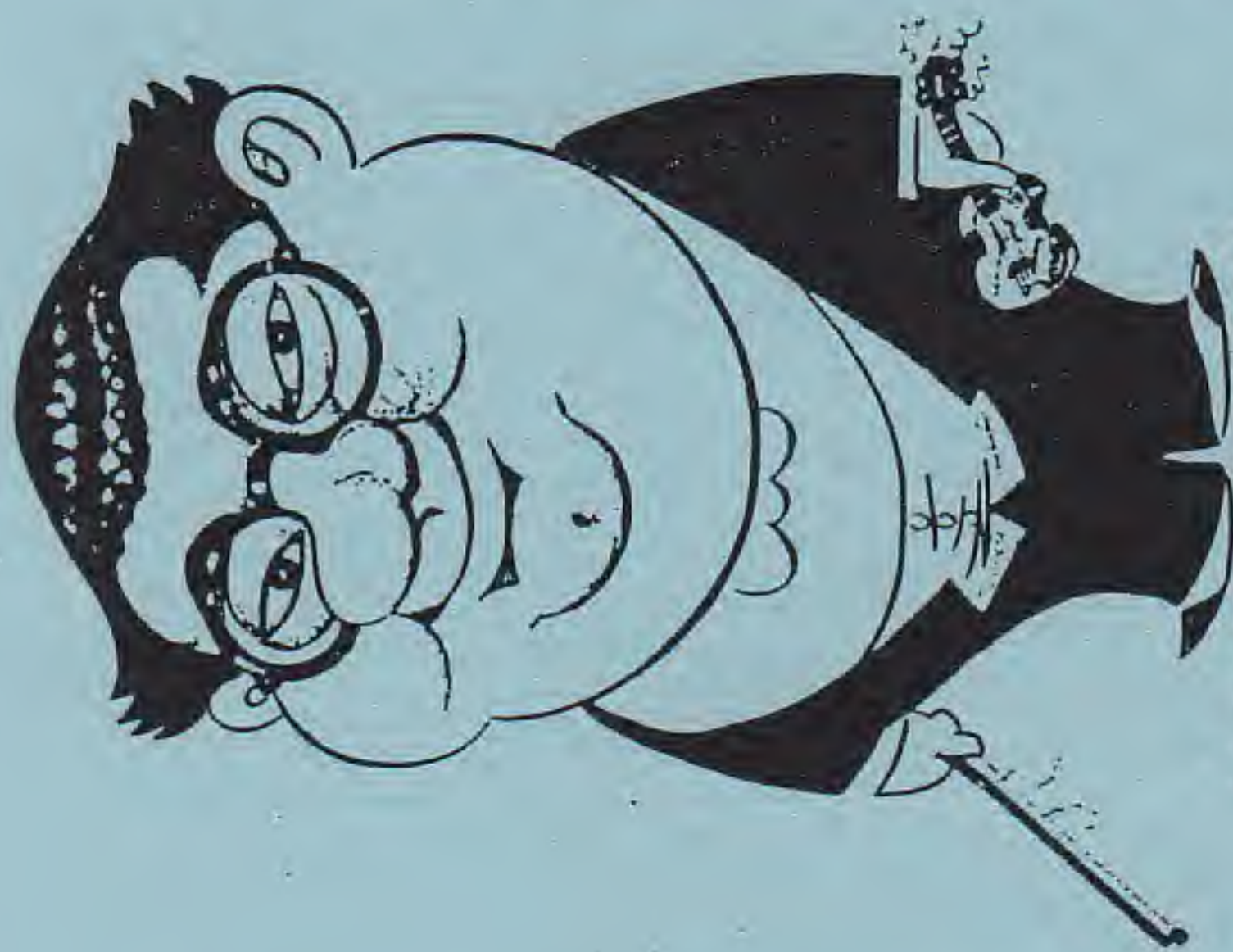
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Recordings by foremost artists and most popular orchestras.

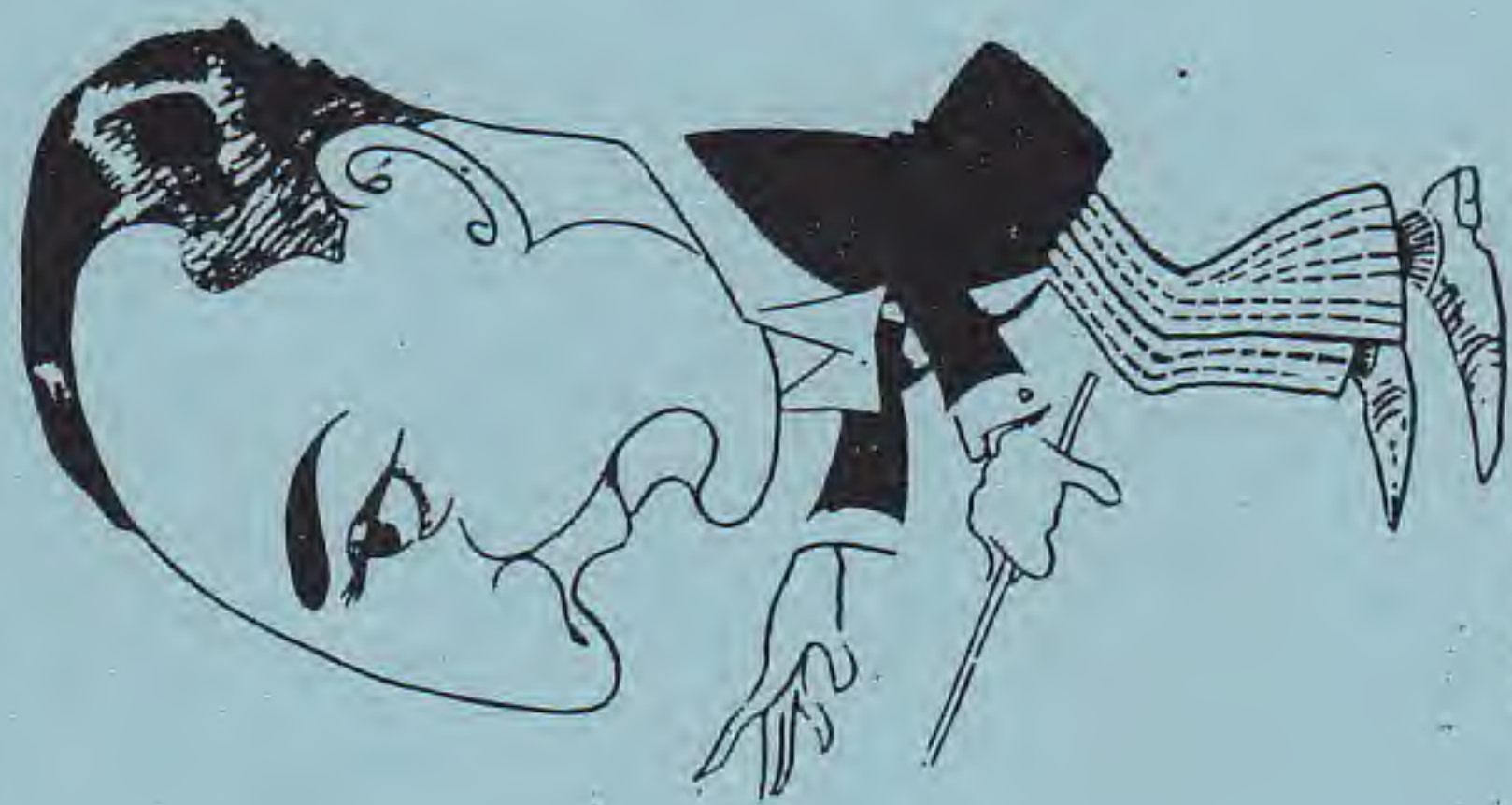
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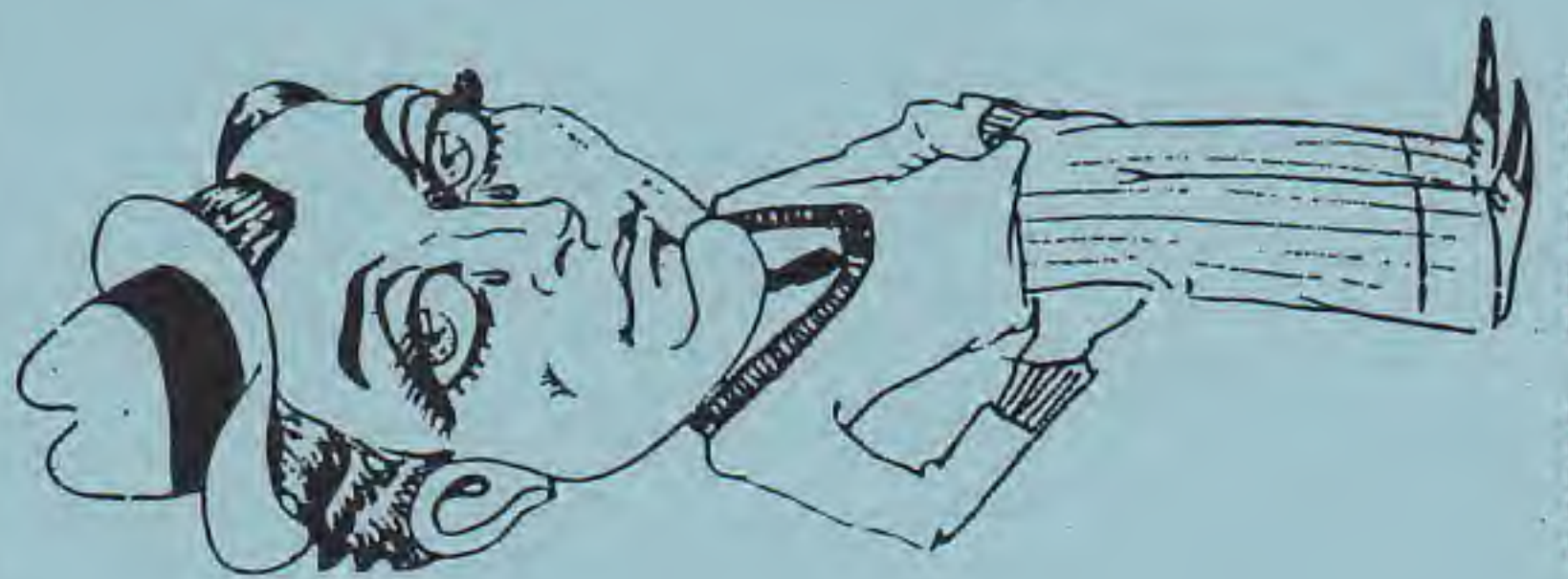
THE BOSWELL SISTERS



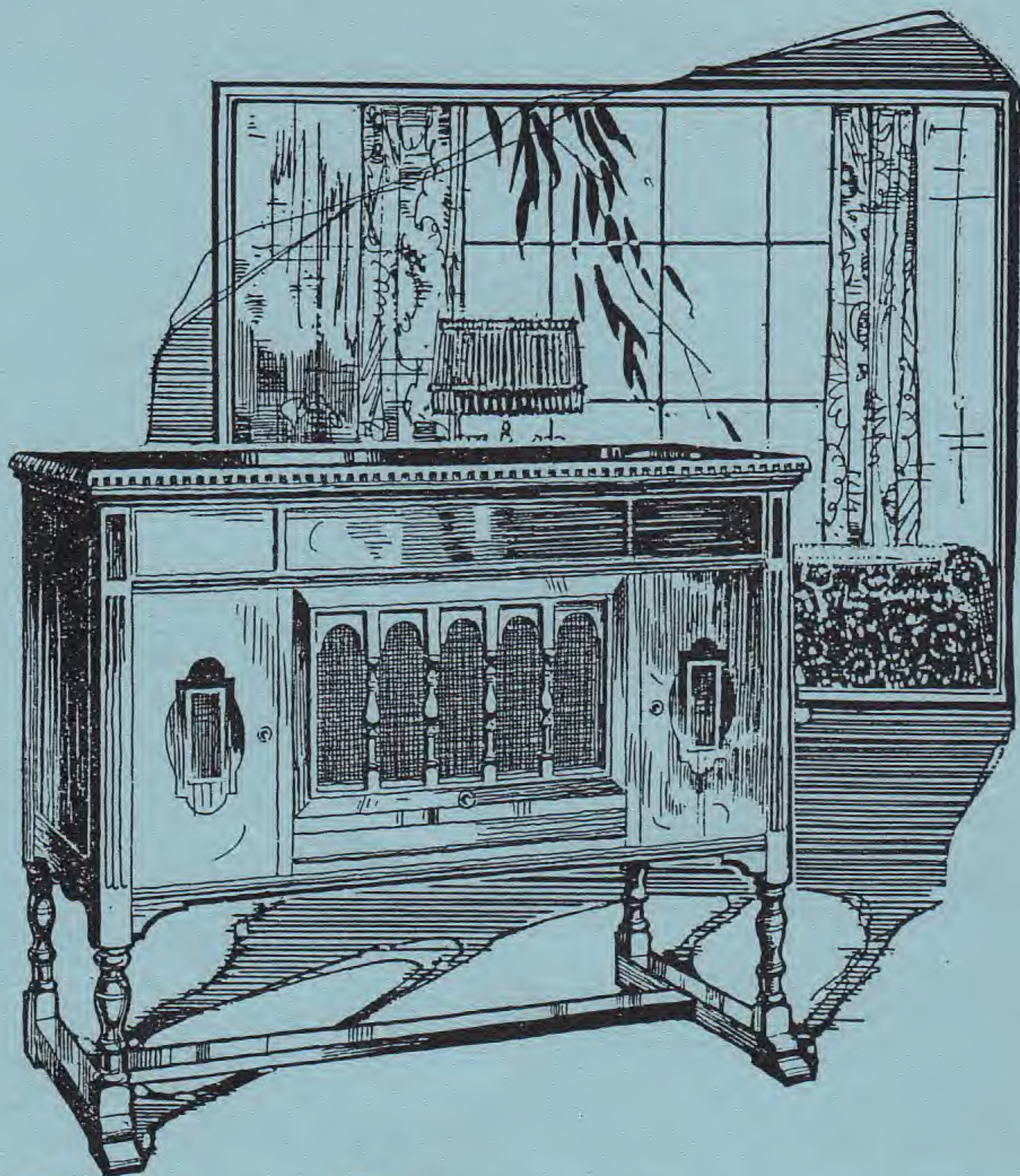
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It is entirely different from any other phonograph—basically and fundamentally different. It plays all records better—plays them with a beauty and quality of tone difficult to duplicate.

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